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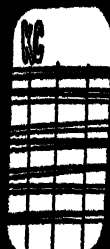








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LUCIUS BENJAMIN (LUKE) APPLING

*Eleventh Series*  
of  
**FAMOUS AMERICAN  
ATHLETES OF  
TODAY**

By  
FRANK WALDMAN



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BOSTON & PUBLISHERS

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TO MY MOTHER AND FATHER  
The First Sports Fans  
I Ever Met

•





## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

**P**ROBABLY no people on this earth are more sports-conscious than Americans. With our work week diminishing, our leisure hours increasing, and with newspapers, magazines, radio and television reporting detailed episodes in athletic contests which have national interest, most of us feel that we are experts about the technique of sports. Generally speaking, sport flies a flag of idealism and the term "good sport" is synonymous with high praise. Sports are good for the morale and the morals of our people. They foster our conception of democracy. At a baseball game, the person seated next to you may be a laborer who has carefully budgeted his savings to go to the game, or a man of national prominence who has budgeted his time for the same privilege. The laborer can completely forget his chores and the executive his responsibilities when a home run is hit with the bases loaded, or, alas, the batter strikes out, as did the immortal Casey many decades ago.

It is significant that the author has gone to baseball for two-thirds of the material in this book. A fair-minded person, I am sure, will agree that the proportion is justified. Baseball is our American game. More youngsters and oldsters follow the fortunes of this sport than any other athletic contest. Even teen-agers can tell



you who is leading either the American or National League in home runs, hitting, runs batted in, stolen bases, etc. They can also tell you who pitches right-handed or left-handed, and what stance their heroes take in the batting box.

I am very happy that the author has devoted a chapter to Barbara Ann Scott and Richard Button—two of the greatest ice figure skaters the world has ever seen, and two inspiring examples of superlative sportsmanship.

The publisher is to be commended for assigning the task of writing this book to Frank Waldman. I have read practically everything that Frank has written during the past five years and am impressed with his keen observation, fair analysis, and honest evaluation of his subjects—all of which make volume eleven of *Famous American Athletes of Today* one of the best of the series and affords us an opportunity to read seventeen chapters of thrilling episodes of sportsmen and sportswomen whose names are so familiar to us.

William J. Bingham  
Director of Athletics,  
Harvard Athletic Association

Cambridge, Massachusetts  
September 19, 1949

LUCIUS BENJAMIN (LUKE) APPLING  
*“Old Aches and Pains”*



# CHAPTER I

LUCIUS BENJAMIN (LUKE) APPLING

"OLD ACHES AND PAINS"

IT IS an ingrained characteristic of the American public to bestow upon its favorite celebrities names other than their own. This habit of re-christening is a mark of esteem—an indication of great popularity on the part of the one named, or should we say, nicknamed. Show us the athlete who is known as Mickey, Slats, or Joltin' Joe and we'll show you the star who ranks high with the American sports-going public. It's the John Joneses and Tom Smiths who never seem to stay around long enough to draw five-figure salaries. But the Pitchin' Pauls and Sluggin' Sams always manage to stay glued somehow in the upper-income bracket in both dollars and popularity. For in sports, a nickname is a mark of success.

Ranking high with the diamond greats of today is a star with so many nicknames it's hard to recall them all. Like Walla Walla, which, according to legend, was so beloved by its inhabitants that they named it twice, Luke Appling of the Chicago White Sox has more nicknames than he knows what to do with.

A few that come to mind are "Old Aches and Pains," "Fumblefoot," "Old Tanglehoof," and "Looook," as it

is pronounced by fellow-Chicagoan Charlie Grimm of the cross-town Cubs.

Yet it was not always so. One of those rarities, a star of such prominence that he went almost from his college campus to major-league stardom, Luke found the going in the big leagues a lot harder and the sought-after popularity a lot more elusive than he had ever believed possible. There were dark days indeed during his first couple of seasons with the White Sox when the derisive cry—"Don't let Appling touch it!"—on infield pop-ups, brought tears of shame and frustration to the eyes of the rookie shortstop. And those shouting the hated words were not rival players; they were Appling's own teammates!

The climax came one afternoon in the late innings of a game in St. Louis. The batter topped an easy roller to the jittery Luke and in his anxiety to make the ordinary play, Appling booted the ball and with it the game. Shuffling off the field, his shoulders drooping disconsolately, he fiercely berated himself. "Why do they always have to hit to me in the clinches?" he groaned.

His third baseman and manager happened by at that moment and heard the words of self-pity and reproach. Wheeling on the youngster, Jimmy Dykes gave him a good dressing-down. "Don't ever let me hear you talking like that again, Appling!" he barked. "You'll never be a major-leaguer until you start hoping they'll hit it to you in the tough spots."

It was a valuable lesson, one the rookie never forgot.

Starting from that day, his play showed steady improvement. Luke's fielding picked up and with it his batting. Now his numerous record achievements are as well known as those of any other top-ranking star in the game.

Lucius Benjamin Appling was born April 2, 1909 in High Point, North Carolina, also the home of ex-American League catcher Myron "Red" Hayworth. Soon after the Appling family picked up stakes and moved to Georgia, the state more familiarly associated with the Appling name.

In those early days, Appling senior found employment on the Atlanta police force as a detective. Later he entered the furniture business in the Georgia city. Although never a ball player, Luke's father gave him his first start in the national pastime. Like other now-famous baseball dads, it was Luke senior who bought Luke junior his first glove and ball.

There was a day famous in Appling family history when pop came home early from work, having decided that it was high time for young Luke's athletic training to begin. Over the protests of Mrs. Appling, little Luke (then about six) and big Luke retired to the back yard to—as Mr. Appling explained it later—"have a catch."

Shortly thereafter the quiet of the Georgia afternoon was rent by anguished howls, and almost immediately, tearful Junior flung himself into the house, blood streaming from his nose and one eye beginning to grow ominously dark.

"What happened?" Mother Appling demanded of pop who came hurrying in after his wounded offspring. Luke's father shuffled embarrassedly. "Nuthin' much, Mother," he explained lamely. "Luke here just tried to catch one with his nose, that's all."

Whether it was from that experience or from later mishaps in a similar vein, or only from a malformed sense of humor no one will ever know, but at any rate the fact remains that today Luke Appling qualifies as baseball's number-one hypochondriac. He has had more aches, pains, sprains, swellings, ruptures and assorted maladies, all thoroughly imaginary, than any other player or players in the history of the game.

During Jimmy Dykes' reign as White Sox manager, a daily locker-room scene would be a groaning Appling painfully making his way to the boss to tell him that he was in such misery that playing ball was out of the question. "Honest, Jimmy, I'm dying," Luke would conclude, rolling his eyes piteously.

"Well," Dykes would bark, "as long as you're dying you might as well die out there at shortstop instead of cluttering things up in here."

Actually Luke has only been injured twice in his major-league career. In September of 1930, immediately after the White Sox had purchased him from Atlanta, he broke a finger when it came in contact with a batted ball. That year Luke's major-league experience consisted of exactly six games, in which he hit .308.

His second legitimate wound occurred in the spring of '38. The date was March 27 and the occasion was

an exhibition game with the Chicago Cubs. This time Luke's leg was painfully broken as he attempted to slide. Still "Old Aches and Pains" managed to get into eighty-one American League games that year and finish with a .303 average.

But don't get the idea that Luke is inordinately lazy or feigns various convenient ailments as a way of getting out of work. In 1933 he rushed about the White Sox infield knocking down so many batted balls that he wore himself to a frazzle and wound up being charged with fifty-five errors to lead the league in that department. He also covered so much ground that he tied Detroit's brilliant Bill Rogell for total chances at that position.

As a boy Luke was always athletic. After the incident of the bloody nose, he took to baseball so wholeheartedly that there were numerous ructions in the Appling family life. Instead of doing his appointed chores, Luke would invariably be out somewhere throwing a ball with his schoolmates, or going swimming, or tramping the Georgia pine woods with his dogs.

The kid grew up fast. Afternoons in the outdoors hardened his muscles and sharpened his eye. Hunting quickened his reflexes to lightning precision. At Atlanta's Fulton High School he was a baseball stand-out and even managed, over the objections of his parents, to get in a year of football.

Following his graduation young Luke entered Oglethorpe University. It was on that southern campus



## 8 FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES

that his baseball career really began. Luke's college coach was Frank Anderson and under his guidance young Appling quickly made the college team.

An interesting sidelight to Luke's nature is furnished by the following incident. Never one to refuse a dare, Luke went out for freshman football on a five-dollar bet with his roommate that he could land a second-string backfield position. Not only did Luke win the bet but the following year he played on the varsity. One of Oglethorpe's victories that year was over a mighty University of Georgia team which later in the season was destined to go north and conquer the Yale bulldog.

Luke still laughs about an experience of his college football days. "We had a play in which I was supposed to take a direct pass from center and then hand it to the other halfback coming across. Everything went fine, except that instead of taking the ball as he was supposed to, the other guy ran right by, leaving me holding it!

"By the time I got over my surprise, there was the whole other team chasing the guy without the ball so I just started running and kept it up till I crossed the goal line. Funny thing was that after the game our coach bawled us all out for having messed up the play—even though it scored the winning touchdown."

After that, Luke stuck strictly to baseball. Summers he played semi-pro with the LaGrange, Georgia team, paying for his college tuition with the money he earned. The rest of the year, except for vacations and

occasional hunting trips, he was at Oglethorpe, boning for his degree.

As things panned out, it was Luke's athletic brilliance that terminated his college career. One spring day in 1930, Luke's sophomore year in college, Oglethorpe was winding up its baseball season with Mercer College. That afternoon Luke had one of his better days at the plate. The current foul-ball artist hit four home runs. Almost immediately he was besieged by major- and minor-league scouts. Among those anxious to sign him was Nap Rucker, then sleuthing for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Despite his youth, Luke proved himself a shrewd businessman. But let Luke tell it in his own words—

"One weekend I sat down and thought of this situation in relation to my future. I decided to give professional baseball a try—a real try. If I was lucky enough to make a go of it, well and good. If not, I was determined to quit after a reasonable time and go back to college."

The offer he accepted was that of the Atlanta Crackers. "It was near home," Luke explained simply.

Appling played in 104 games for the Crackers and hit a lusty .326. In something like three months he was on his way to the majors. The Chicago White Sox bought him.

A little earlier we mentioned Luke's prowess as a foul-ball artist. Stories of his exploits are legion, yet two, as perhaps the best, immediately come to mind. Once on a road trip, Luke brought a couple of home-

town friends to the game. Before game time, Appling went to the Sox traveling secretary and asked for a pair of passes, but for some unaccountable reason his request was turned down. Angered, Luke dug into his own pocket for the price of two seats in the rickety grandstand. Then, vowing revenge, he picked up his glove and trotted out to his position.

Luke had his revenge plus a bit more. Each time he came to bat that afternoon he deliberately fouled off pitches. By game's end he had driven some two dozen baseballs, representing a cash outlay to the management in excess of \$30, into the hands of eager spectators who gratefully pocketed the souvenirs.

The other occasion concerns the opening game of the 1940 season at Comiskey Park. That day, when Bob Feller<sup>1</sup> was setting down the White Sox in order for his no-hit masterpiece, Appling, by actual count, sliced fifteen pitches into the stands as he tried to work Feller for a walk.

This habit of fouling off pitches is not luck with Appling. Neither is it a gift. Long ago Luke realized the wisdom of making the opposing pitcher work for his outs by pitching as many balls as each hitter could possibly tax him. The reason for this was two-fold. First, it overworked the hurler's arm, oftentimes resulting in his collapse in late innings. Second, it put terrific strain on his control.

A game some years back in Yankee Stadium illustrates Luke's theory.

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Seventh Series.

Red Ruffing, then the ace of the Yankee pitching staff, was doing the hurling for the New Yorkers. Somehow, in the very first inning, the usually weak-hitting White Sox got the first two hitters on. Up came Luke. On the mound Big Red bore down and quickly got two strikes over. Evidently figuring to sneak the third one in instead of teasing Appling with a couple of waste balls, Ruffing came through with a good pitch. But Luke, too, had done some figuring and this involved getting on base. Timing his swing perfectly, he methodically fouled off the next four pitches Ruffing burned into the strike zone.

Red began to fidget. Six pitches and he still had only a two-strike count. Attempting to get Appling to go after a bad pitch, he threw one a foot outside. Luke let it ride. Ruffing switched to his over-the-plate pitches. As fast as they came in Luke sent them spinning over the foul lines. Then Ruffing's control slipped and he served up another ball. This went on until the count reached three and two. Eventually the sweating Ruffing gave Appling the fourth ball he was looking for and, grinning, Luke tossed aside his bat and trotted to first. The next batter, Mike Kreevich, promptly unloaded the bags with an extra base drive and the Sox were off to a three-run lead.

From this ability of Appling's to concentrate on the task at hand you might think him a bit on the humorless side, but this is far from the case. Despite his amazing string of varied and assorted ailments, Luke is a carefree, happy-go-lucky fellow, popular with ball

players and umpires alike. Only rarely in his seventeen-year, major-league career has Luke so riled an arbiter as to be ejected from a game.

Luke's playing philosophy is simple. He never worries about a strike or a time at bat that has passed. The thing that concerns him is the pitch that is coming up. And in the field, he is exactly the same. On the occasions when he does blow one, Luke looks after the offensive little ball with a surprised "Now what do you think made me do that?" attitude and, grinning reassuringly, goes back to his position.

Luke's theories and philosophy have paid off rather well. During his career he has twice led the American League in hitting, once in 1936 with a .388 mark and again in '43 with a .328 average. In '47 he was named to the league All-Star squad for the fourth time. During the 1949 season he broke Rabbit Maranville's record of 2,153 games at shortstop.

Yet Luke had a hard battle with himself before he achieved stardom. In his early days, he was a chronic worrier who'd tighten up so over a muffed ball that he'd be just as likely to kick away the next few chances that came his way. How he overcame his habit of fighting ground balls is in large part due to the understanding and guidance of Jimmy Dykes while White Sox manager. In 1933 when the going was especially heavy for Luke, Dykes told reporters that the chief trouble with Appling was that he brooded too much about past errors. "He worries on the field and he worries on the bench," is the way Jimmy put it. His

advice to Luke was to forget the errors as soon as he had made them and make up his mind not to repeat.

Luke did just that and, almost magically, his hitting and fielding improved. In 1933, the year after his marriage, he upped his batting average from .274 to .322 and his fielding mark from .934 to .939.

Maybe Luke went a little too far with his new-found "don't worry" philosophy. Among other things he began to be late to spring training camp. If it wasn't contract negotiations, it was something else. Once his car broke down en route and he blithely bought another on the spot. Somehow, that accounted for a delay of several days. One year, magically, Luke turned up in training camp before anyone else had arrived. How come? "Shucks," Luke grinned, "I got to thinkin' it was about time to be headin' for camp so I just started out. Never did bother to check the date."

That's the way Luke is—easy-going, good-natured, almost without a care in the world. A couple of years ago the White Sox were playing their intra-city rivals, the Cubs, in an exhibition game at Los Angeles' Wrigley Field. During a Cub session at bat, Andy Pafko, the brilliant young outfielder of the National Leaguers, roared down to second from first, intent on breaking up an obvious double play. He piled into Appling, who was making the pivot with enough force to flatten a brick wall. Luke went one way, the ball went the other, but Pafko was out.

At the inning's end, as Luke was coming off the field, he passed Charlie Grimm, the Cubs' manager.

"Charlie," Luke drawled, shaking his head, "that Pafko plays too hard. Tell him this isn't any World Series—it's just a little ol' training game, will you?"

Actually, despite his daily complaints and miseries, Appling is pretty close to being an indestructible ball player. He's still cavorting around at shortstop, the running-est position in the infield, long after his contemporaries on rival clubs have hung up their spikes and begun cultivating paunches. In 1947 he held himself together sufficiently long to play in 139 games and hit .306. In '46, after groaning that he'd do well to play seventy-five games, he got into 149 and led the league in assists. And in a stretch of five years up to '44, he played in all but sixteen of his team's games!

Never one to admit to improving health, the resourceful Appling is always coming up with a new (imaginary of course) ailment. Late in the 1943 season he decided it was his eyesight. His eyes were going back on him. He even went so far as to show up in the clubhouse before a night game wearing smoked glasses! Luke didn't know if he was well enough to play. With a little persuasion, he condescended to go out on the field and look up into the lights. Luke promised to play if he didn't see two lights where there should only be one. Naturally, he played.

No one knows whether Appling is kidding about his famous miseries or not. Over the years his teammates have come to expect particularly brilliant performances from him on those days when he groans and complains the most.

Certainly his magnificent baseball record is that of an extremely healthy man, and his popularity with players and public alike is enough to turn a politician green with envy.

Perhaps the best insight into the true nature of the easy-going Georgian is the following little-known story—

Some years ago the caretaker on Luke's place in Georgia wrote him asking what to do about some small neighbor boys who had been trespassing on Appling's property to fish in his private lake. Luke remembered his own boyhood days, fishing and tramping the Georgia woods with his dogs. Quickly he sent back word that it was all right for the kids to fish—but not to let them know that they weren't getting away with something. It might spoil their fun.

How can you help liking a guy like that?



## LUCIUS B. (LUKE) APPLING

Born, High Point, N.C., April 2, 1909.

Bats right. Throws right. Height 5' 10". Weight, 175 pounds.

Year	Club	League	Pos.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Avg.	PO	A	E	PA
1930	Atlanta	So. A.	ss	104	374	63	122	19	17	5	75	13	.376	224	302	42	926
1930	Chicago	A.L.	ss	6	26	2	8	2	0	0	2	2	.308	13	19	3	.914
1931	Chicago	A.L.	ss	96	297	36	69	13	4	1	28	9	.232	147	232	42	.900
1932	Chicago	A.L. ss-3b	ss	139	489	66	134	20	10	3	63	9	.274	270	419	49	.934
1933	Chicago	A.L.	ss	151	612	90	197	36	10	6	85	6	.322	314	534	55	.939
1934	Chicago	A.L.	ss	118	452	75	137	28	6	2	61	3	.303	264	357	35	.947
1935	Chicago	A.L.	ss	153	525	94	161	28	6	1	71	12	.307	335	356	39	.958
1936	Chicago	A.L.	ss	138	526	111	204	31	7	6	128	10	.388*	320	471	41	.951
1937	Chicago	A.L.	ss	154	574	98	182	42	8	4	77	18	.317	280	541	49	.944
1938	Chicago	A.L.	ss	81	294	41	89	14	0	0	44	1	.303	149	258	20	.953
1939	Chicago	A.L.	ss	148	516	82	162	16	6	0	56	16	.314	289	461	39	.951
1940	Chicago	A.L.	ss	150	566	96	197	27	13	0	79	3	.348	257	436	37	.949
1941	Chicago	A.L.	ss	154	592	93	186	26	8	1	57	12	.314	294	473	42	.948
1942	Chicago	A.L.	ss	142	543	78	142	26	4	3	53	17	.262	269	418	38	.948
1943	Chicago	A.L.	ss	155	585	63	192	33	2	3	80	27	.328*	300	500	36	.957
1944-1945 in the United States Army																	
1945	Chicago	A.L.	ss	18	58	12	21	2	2	1	10	1	.362	37	56	7	.930
1946	Chicago	A.L.	ss	149	582	59	180	27	5	1	55	6	.309	252	505	39	.951
1947	Chicago	A.L. ss-3b	ss	139	503	67	154	29	0	8	49	8	.306	233	423	35	.949
1948	Chicago	A.L.	ss-3b	139	497	63	156	16	2	0	47	10	.314	217	373	35	.944
Complete major league totals 18 yrs. 2230 8237 1226 2571 416 93 40 1045 170 312 4240 7032 641 .946																	
* Indicates led league or was tied for league leadership.																	

## ALL STAR TOTALS

1936	A.L.	ss	4	0	1	0	0	0	2	.250	2	0	1.000
1940	A.L.	ss	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	.667	0	0	.000
1946	A.L.	ph	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	0	0	.000
1947	A.L.	ph	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1.000	0	0	.000
9 1 4 1 0 0 2 .444 2 2 0 1.000													

Outstanding performances: Led Amer. Lea. in batting, 1936 & 1943. Made 2,000th major league hit Aug. 13, 1948. Tied rec. most errors at ss, three in one inning, Aug. 31, 1941. Most years leading ss in errors (1933, '35, '37, '39, '46) and assists (1933, '35, '37, '39, '41, '43, '46). Broke Amer. Lea. rec. for assists by third baseman (10)—June 20, 1948 (later tied by K. Keltner).

BARKER, BEARD, GROZA AND JONES

*"The Four Kentucky Wildcats"*





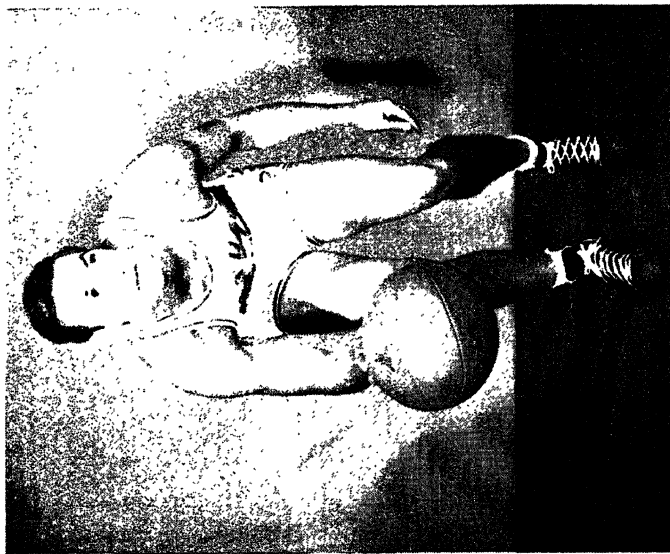
RALPH BEARD



CLIFF BARKER



ALEX GROZA



WALLACE (WAH WAH) JONES

## CHAPTER II

BARKER, BEARD, GROZA AND JONES

"THE FOUR KENTUCKY WILDCATS"

FOR countless generations the State of Kentucky has been famed for its racehorses, for its bluegrass and for the flavor and thirst-quenching coolness of its mint juleps. Mortals fortunate enough to have come in contact with any one of the aforementioned phenomena have waxed justly lyrical. Over the years, the Churchill Downs oval and the color and pageantry attending the annual "Run for the Roses" has become more celebrated than the legends of Olympus and the later exploits of America's fabled Paul Bunyan.

However, in the late 1940's there came a change. A blue-and-white clad juggernaut, composed largely of strong-limbed young giants from the surrounding Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky hills, appeared on the national basketball horizon and, in the ensuing years, rolled methodically over practically all opposition that could be furnished by the rest of the country.

Then, having laid waste the various domestic basketball citadels, the conquerors betook themselves to Europe, where they proceeded to wreak their accustomed havoc on the best that the rest of the world could offer.

As individuals, they were a credit to their school and to their families. As athletes, they were without equal. As a team, they beggared description. Everywhere they played they set records. As part of a United States Olympic basketball team (the AAU Phillips Oilers composing the other portion of the squad), they overwhelmed rivals Switzerland (by an 81-21 score), France (by a 65-21 margin), Egypt (by a 66-28 count) and Mexico (by a 71-40 score).

They ran riot in their own backyard, winning forty-three consecutive Southeastern Conference games over a period of four seasons. They set another conference record by scoring 927 points in a single season (1948-'49). Over a stretch of years (up to and including the 1948-'49 season), they added their bit to a string of seventy-three consecutive games won on their home floor. That year they were selected by the Associated Press as the best college team in the nation, as well as the best defensive team in the United States. In the years from 1945-'49 the team set a record by taking part in ten tournaments.

In 1949 they won the NCAA tournament. In 1948 alone they won the Southeastern Conference tournament, the NCAA tournament and eight Olympic games. In 1947 they won the Southeastern. And in 1946, the formidable Wildcats furthered their reputation by winning the National Invitational and the Southeastern tournament.

Their won-lost figures are almost beyond belief. In 1945-'46 they won twenty-eight games, losing but two.

In 1946-'47 it was thirty-four and three and in 1947-'48 the totals were thirty-six and three.

From 1945 to '49 the names of Ralph Beard, Alex Groza, Cliff Barker and "Wah Wah" Jones were more than household words. Seldom before in the history of college basketball had the individual members of a team so captured the public's fancy. Stanford's great Hank Luisetti was a nationally known star, yet try to name three of his teammates. The same is true of George Mikan of DePaul and "Easy Ed" Macauley of St. Louis. Not even Illinois's famed "Whizz Kids" of the early '40's commanded the interest and attention accorded the Four Kentucky Wildcats.

Individually and collectively they reaped a harvest of awards. Beard and Groza were overwhelming All-American choices in both 1947 and '48. Beard made the All-Southeastern Conference three years running—in 1946, '47 and '48. Jones made it the same three years. The Helms Athletic Foundation selected Beard for its first team in both 1947 and '48. The National Association of College Basketball Coaches twice picked Beard as its choice for Player of the Year. While he was still a sophomore, New York basketball writers named him the most valuable player to appear in Madison Square Garden.

Groza was the leading scorer on the U.S. Olympic team. While in the Army in 1945 he was voted the outstanding service player in the nation. He was picked as the most valuable player in the NCAA tournament at Madison Square Garden in 1947-'48.



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Of the four, two—Barker and Jones—played as married men. Of the four, only Barker and Groza saw military service. And of the four only Beard and Jones had met prior to their entering the University of Kentucky.

Beard, smallest of the quartet, bore the description "everybody's All-American" during his last two seasons. Before that he had had his troubles and, at one point, had even left the university to enroll at nearby Louisville University. The occurrence took place during Ralph's freshman year. A varsity halfback (playing under wartime eligibility rules), Beard suffered a shoulder injury during the fourth game of the season that was serious enough to bench him for the remainder of the year.

A few days later at practice one of the coaches made a slighting remark about the team and Ralph took it as a personal affront. If that was the way they felt at the University of Kentucky, he wanted no part of it. Ralph packed his bags and went home to Louisville. He stayed one day. Meanwhile his high-school coach heard of the mixup and promptly called basketball coach Adolph Rupp at the University of Kentucky. In a couple of hours Beard had cooled off and was back in good standing at the university.

The manner in which the usually easy-going Beard blew up at a relatively inoffensive remark is indicative of the all-out effort he brought to athletic participation. Actually, it is doubtful if an athlete could begin his career at an earlier date than did Ralph.

According to his mother, Ralph started shooting baskets when he was a baby, with his potty serving as his first hoop!

But legend or no, the fact remains that Ralph grew up with a basketball in his hands.

He was born in Hardinsburg, Kentucky, on December 12, 1927. Almost as soon as he was old enough to walk, a basketball hoop adorned the wall of the Beard family garage. Afternoons after school Ralph and his playmates used to spend hours throwing the ball through the hoop in pick-up games.

Ralph's first contact with organized team play came in 1940 when he was a student at Hardinsburg High School. That year the team went to the state tournament, losing in the second round. In 1941 they went as far as the regional finals.

When Ralph reached the age of fourteen, his family moved to Louisville where he finished growing up. There he was a four-letter man at Male High School. Football, baseball, basketball and track were the sports in which he took part his last two years at Male. His senior year the school won the state basketball championship for the first time.

It was in 1945 that Ralph and Kentucky teammate-to-be Wallace Jones met. The occasion was the Kentucky High School vs. Indiana High School All Star basketball game in Butler Field House. Both, naturally, were members of the Kentucky team. In the game, won by the Kentuckians, Jones collected eleven points and little Ralph fourteen. Although Coach Rupp

was in the stands at the time, neither Beard nor Jones knew they were headed for the Wildcat campus.

There is a popular legend at the University that Coach Rupp doesn't bother to shake hands with a basketball candidate unless he has to duck his head to get through the over-six-foot door frame to his office. But when little (five-foot-ten-inch) Ralph Beard first appeared on the scene, Rupp welcomed the All Star high-school player with open arms.

In Ralph's first season, 1945-'46, the Wildcats won twenty-eight of thirty games. Lone losses were to Temple, 53-45, and to Notre Dame, 56-47, the latter on what was undoubtedly Ralph Beard's worst single night in four years of varsity ball. After the game Beard made no excuses for his poor play.

Notre Dame Coach Elmer Ripley later admitted his team had played according to a carefully conceived plan designed to upset and harass freshman Beard. Knowing Beard's remarkable speed and his fondness for leaving the man he was guarding to steal and intercept opponents' passes, the Irish team baited a trap for him.

The first time Notre Dame got the ball, one of the guards faked a pass to All-American Buddy Hassett, who was being guarded by Beard. Fooled by the move, Beard left Hassett to leap between the two guards and into the path of the basketball he thought was coming. As Beard leaped one way, Hassett cut the other and was perfectly clear and unhindered to take the delayed pass.

Although Ralph knew what he had done, the realization that he had been made to look bad before his hometown crowd upset him. He tightened up and for the rest of the night was unable to recover his customary poise.

When the team got back to Lexington, Coach Rupp took Beard aside. He told Ralph that he had to learn to relax, to learn to lose his pre-game tension. He also told Ralph that he had been working too hard and as a remedy suggested that he miss practice for a few days. He even went so far as to order his freshman star to break training.

Several hours later teammates Jack Tingle and Jack Parkinson spotted Ralph in a downtown café solemnly following orders by filling up on pie and ice cream!

But Ralph learned a valuable lesson from his experience. Although continuing to play at top-speed and in a manner designed to bring envy to a whirling dervish, Beard schooled himself to keep his jitters in check. Perhaps the climax to his experiment in self-discipline came during the 1946 post-season Invitational tournament finals at Madison Square Garden. There, before a packed house that was roaring itself into a frenzy, Ralph stepped to the foul line in the last forty seconds and calmly made good the free throw that broke a 45-45 deadlock and gave Kentucky the championship, 46-45.

There's another very good reason for Beard's outstanding success as a basketball player. He is one of the hardest-working men in the game. He neither

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spares himself in games or during practice sessions. An example from the 1947 season will serve as an excellent illustration.

That year Kentucky had been defeated by Utah in the finals of the National Invitational tournament. On the way back to Lexington, Ralph went to Coach Rupp for advice on what he could do to improve his game. The Kentucky season had just ended a few hours before, yet here was Beard, a practically unanimous All-America choice who had been voted the outstanding college player in the nation, already thinking about how to better himself for next year!

Rupp told Beard that he'd have to improve himself by twenty-five percent—that is, if he wanted to repeat the honors he had just won. He warned Ralph that henceforth every opponent would be pointing for him, thus making the job that much tougher. He also told Ralph that he'd have to learn to shoot long shots from the floor, and in order to do that he'd have to change his entire technique on two-handed push shots.

Surprised, Ralph asked his coach what he meant. Rupp told him that he had an error in his form to correct. Every shot Ralph took from the floor rotated to the right because of too much right hand pressure on the ball. Beard was shocked, yet upon checking with teammates, found that his coach's observations were true.

The Kentucky train arrived in Lexington at eight o'clock in the morning and by two in the afternoon Beard was on the floor practicing his shot. All summer

long he practiced, usually three times a week. According to his coach, he took approximately five hundred shots a day. When he returned to college for the 1947-'48 season he was one of the deadliest set-shots in the nation.

Many consider that Beard reached what was perhaps his college peak in the 1948 Olympic qualifications with the Phillips Oilers. With seven-foot Bob Kurland laying all over Kentucky center Alex Groza, Wildcat strategy depended upon Beard's ability to hit from outside and to confuse the Oilers' defenses by driving in for lay-ups when they came out from under the basket to stop his set-shooting. In the finals of the Olympic trials, Beard scored twenty-three points to twenty by Kurland.

After the game he was one of five Kentucky players named to the U.S. Olympic basketball team. The others were teammates Ken Rollins, Cliff Barker, Alex Groza and Wallace "Wah Wah" Jones.

Probably the least publicized and at the same time most spectacular member of the All Star quartet was World War II veteran Cliff Barker. Married, as was Jones, Barker also played on the baseball team with Beard and Wah Wah Jones. Barker was the only member of the quartet to play only three years of varsity basketball. The others, because of relaxed wartime eligibility standards, played four years.

Born in Yorktown, Indiana, January 15, 1921, Barker was the second youngest of four brothers. An average student at Yorktown High School, he lettered

in basketball and baseball. There was no football team during his school career.

Cliff entered the University of Kentucky in 1939 and had already won several letters when the war intervened. Sent to Europe as a B-17 gunner, he was shot down and spent sixteen months in a German prison camp. Even there he found time to make himself a better basketball player. He got in the habit of fooling around with a volleyball to pass the time. From handling, palming and rolling the sphere from hand to hand and actually from finger to finger, Barker learned the uncanny ball-handling magic that delighted and astounded thousands of basketball fans on his return to college competition at the University of Kentucky.

Oldest of the seniors (he has been married since 1943), Barker exerted a necessary settling influence on his teammates. Used primarily as a spot player after his return to Kentucky in 1946, Cliff's chief talents lay as a ball handler and play maker. Yet it is interesting to note that he and not any one of his three high-scoring teammates holds the Alumni Gymnasium record for the longest field goal. Barker wrote his name into the record books during the Wildcats' final home game of the 1948-'49 season when, with some nine seconds to go in a game against Vanderbilt, he arched in a tremendous two-handed shot that later was measured as having traveled sixty-five feet. Only reason the otherwise conservative Barker took the wild and woolly shot was that at the time his team had an insurmountable lead.

Barker was a three-year varsity basketball letterman at Kentucky as well as a letterman in baseball. In the latter sport he played centerfield his first two years, later switching to the pitching mound. In 1948 he led his teammates in home runs and runs batted in.

Pairing with Ralph Beard as an All-American basketball selection was Alex Groza. Six feet seven inches, he was the team's giant and all-important center. Alex, a brother of Lou "The Toe" Groza, place-kicking specialist of the Cleveland Browns of the All-American Football Conference, came to the University of Kentucky from Martin's Ferry, a quiet mill town located in the heart of the Ohio River Valley, where he was born October 7, 1926.

Of Hungarian descent, the four Groza brothers made their athletic exploits common knowledge among townspeople and neighbors. Naturally, it was from older brothers John and Frank that Alex received his early and valuable coaching.

Alex' father, a former coal miner and mill worker, came in the middle twenties to Martin's Ferry where he invested his life's savings in a poolroom which he later converted into a tavern. It was in the living quarters directly upstairs that Alex and his brothers were carefully reared by their hard-working parents.

First of the brothers to attain athletic stardom was John. After an outstanding career as a three-sport athlete at Martin's Ferry High School, he played freshman football at the University of West Virginia and later played at St. Thomas (now Scranton University).



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He was the first Groza to play basketball in Madison Square Garden.

Four years later Frank followed his brother to high school where he was an outstanding athlete in baseball, football and basketball. His post-high-school athletic career consisted of one year of Class D baseball.

Brother Lou was already a senior in high school when young Alex entered. Even so, they played one year together. That was during the 1941-'42 season when the team was unsuccessfully defending its state title. In those days, unlike his strapping brothers, Alex was a tall, gangling youngster who was dubbed "Weed" by his schoolmates after he grew three inches in one summer. By the time of his graduation in 1944, he had filled out considerably and was of a size and stature to compare favorably with the rest of the clan. His father weighed three hundred pounds and his mother over two hundred.

In high school Alex more than lived up to the high standards set by his three brothers. An honor student, he placed sixteenth scholastically in his class of 177. In 1944 he was named honorary captain of the all-Ohio scholastic team. His last year he scored 628 points in twenty-seven games, a new Ohio scoring record. The team won twenty-six games in a row before bowing out in the semi-finals of the state tournament.

Because of Groza's outstanding high-school athletic record, he received offers from numerous colleges. However, before accepting any one of them, Alex went for advice to his high-school coach, Floyd Baker. A

good friend of Kentucky Coach Rupp, Baker advised his graduating player that if he wanted to be sure of gaining recognition as a basketball star, the place for him to go was the University of Kentucky.

Shortly thereafter Rupp went to Martin's Ferry as guest speaker at a basketball banquet. While there he met Alex; from the first their admiration was mutual.

Groza's first season at the university was interrupted by his being called into the army. But before departing, he helped the Wildcats run up a string of eleven consecutive victories.

Inclined to be moody and at times unsure of himself, Groza really matured during his service career at Camp Hood, Texas. Playing regularly, he attained the polish and smoothness that made him an All-American selection when he returned to the University of Kentucky. As a sophomore during the 1946-'47 season, he led the Wildcats in scoring with 393 points, one more than was scored by teammate Ralph Beard.

Despite the athletic recognition he continued to gain, Groza remained unspoiled. A devout Catholic and an ardent church-goer, even during basketball trips, he was elected vice-president of a campus religious organization. During the Wildcats' championship years, he served as unofficial team spokesman. His popularity with his mates was reflected in his election to the presidency of the K Club for letter-winners at Kentucky.

Unspoiled from the first by his parents, Alex' complete lack of conceit stemmed from his earliest days.

Before leaving Martin's Ferry High School for the University of Kentucky, he asked a hometown sports-writer friend for a game action picture showing a player about half his size stealing a rebound from him. "I want to put it up in my room at college," Alex explained, "so I'll always have something to put me in my place if I'm ever tempted to get swell-headed."

Under Rupp's skillful direction, Groza became during his final two years one of the finest centers in collegiate basketball. Of him his own coach remarked, "If I never had a worse center than Groza I'd be completely happy."

Big, yet withal possessed of remarkable speed for a man of his size, Groza's outstanding contribution to Kentucky basketball supremacy during the late '40's was his uncanny ability to control both the offensive and defensive backboards. Writing of his performance in the 1948 NCAA Eastern finals against Holy Cross, the New York *Sunday News* said in part:

"Groza's twenty-three points don't give the full story of the misery he caused Holy Cross. He played both backboards as if he owned them." Coach Rupp termed him "one of the finest defensive and offensive rebounders the game has ever known."

Example of the respect in which he was held by opponents concerns a game with the University of Tennessee during which Vol players, unable during the game to keep Groza from dominating both backboards, were told by the stands "don't shoot." The reason? Groza was still picking off rebounds.

Final member of Kentucky's fabulous four was native-grown Wallace Jones. He was born July 14, 1926 in Harlan, a coal-mining section of the state more renowned for the bitterness of its industrial labor relations than for the preëminence of its schoolboy athletes.

In his four high-school years in Harlan, where he was raised by his widowed mother, Jones established a national scholastic record in basketball by scoring an unheard-of 2,398 points! In addition he was a four-year letterman in three sports—basketball, football and baseball. He was a two-year all-scholastic football choice and a four-year all-scholastic choice in basketball. At the time of his graduation from high school in 1945, he was one of the most sought-after youths in the country.

But for a chance acquaintance, Jones would very probably have gone to the University of Tennessee. Friendship with Edna Ball, a student at Kentucky, was largely instrumental in his decision to enroll at the Lexington campus.

Wah Wah arrived at Lexington in September of 1945, fully intent on turning out for basketball. However, with some weeks remaining before Coach Rupp's initial call for candidates, he figured he might as well give football a try. In less than a week he played end against the University of Cincinnati.

Lacking any kind of practice or conditioning, Jones' performance was nevertheless such as to prompt Head Coach Bernie Shively to start him the following Saturday against Michigan State. He went on to become

the team's leading pass receiver for three years. He was a varsity football letterman four years, making numerous all-opponent teams.

He fared equally well as a baseball player, pitching on the Kentucky varsity. One of his best efforts came during the 1947 season against Tennessee, his "almost" alma mater. The Vols, who had beaten Kentucky three straight times, came to Lexington intent on making it four in a row. However, Jones speedily changed their minds. He threw a three-hitter at them and went on to finish the season with three wins and no losses. In the three games he allowed but thirteen hits while striking out twenty-four and issuing but four bases on balls.

Basketball, however, remained his first interest. His start in the game came when, as a third-grader in Harlan, he was good enough to play guard on a team of bigger boys. There he won his first athletic award—a small, bronze basketball.

Wah Wah, so named because as a child his older brother Hugh had difficulty pronouncing his name, Wallace, didn't shift to forward until high school. There, having attained his natural height and weight, he went on to compile the record that led Coach Rupp to hail his arrival at Lexington with the words, "Jones is the greatest high-school basketball player ever to come out of Kentucky . . . He should be one of our all-time greats." During the next four years rival coaches ruefully nodded their agreement to that prediction.

His first year Wah Wah didn't have much difficulty making the varsity basketball team. With many of the returning stars having trouble getting into shape after years or months in service, Jones stepped into the center position, where he became a practically unanimous choice for all-conference honors. That was the year Ralph Beard's last-second free throw beat Rhode Island State in the Invitational tournament at Madison Square Garden, 46-45.

The following year, as a sophomore, he found things a bit different. Forced to turn out late for basketball because of a second season with the football team, Jones found army returnees Alex Groza and All-American Bob Brannum battling for his position at center.

Far from discouraged, Jones quietly accepted the added handicap of improper conditioning. Instead of becoming downcast, he set about working himself into basketball-playing shape. By the fourth game of the season he was given the starting berth ahead of Brannum and Groza. But minutes afterward he was back on the bench with a badly sprained ankle. Again he refused to become discouraged. By mid-season he was back in the thick of the fight for a starting position.

Jones and Edna Ball, the girl who was responsible for his matriculation at Kentucky, were married August 9, 1947, in Middlesboro, Kentucky, at the close of his sophomore year. Graduated the following June, Mrs. Jones settled into a life of domesticity while Wah Wah went on to even greater athletic stardom.

He was a key performer on the NCAA championship basketball team of 1947-'48 and a member of the U.S. Olympic basketball squad. In 1949 he was back again as the Wildcats roared through the NCAA tournament, after having provided the sporting upset of the year by bowing to Loyola, 67-56, in the National Invitational tournament. While in no way detracting from the Loyola feat, the fact remains that Kentucky was leading 47-46 when Jones fouled out midway through the second half.

Usually Jones had been able to provide the inspirational spark necessary to pull the Wildcats through their toughest games. It had been his set shot in the final fifteen seconds of the Invitational quarter-finals in March of 1947 that had enabled the Wildcats to avert what would have been a stunning upset by Long Island University. But with Jones, and shortly thereafter Groza, out of play against Loyola, Kentucky didn't have enough to avert the upset.

With their 1948-'49 NCAA victory, the saga of Kentucky's fabulous foursome came to an end, at least as far as intercollegiate competition was concerned. The records they wrote, both as individuals and as a team, speak for themselves.

They weren't without flaw. It is true that once in a while they lost a game. Yet it was their ability following these upsets to pick themselves off the floor and carry on in true championship style that won for them their lasting place in the annals of American basketball games.

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In the years to come, better individual players may appear. It will be some time, however, before one college will be able to put forth an aggregation to match the records established by Kentucky's Barker, Beard, Groza and Jones.

## UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY TEAM RECORD

Season	Won	Lost
1945-46 .....	28	2
1946-47 .....	34	3
1947-48* .....	36	3
1948-49 .....	32	2
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Totals .....	130	10

\* Does not include Olympic Games.





HENRY EUGENE (GENE) BEARDEN

*"1948's American League Rookie  
of the Year"*





HENRY EUGENE (GENE) BEARDEN



## CHAPTER III

HENRY EUGENE (GENE) BEARDEN

"1948'S AMERICAN LEAGUE ROOKIE OF THE YEAR"

THE U.S.S. *Helena* was dying. Ripped apart by a Japanese torpedo, the gallant warship wallowed heavily in the South Pacific water, as above and below decks men and officers of the United States Navy fought desperately to hold her together, to fight off the under-sea raider that was claiming another victim. But the hopelessness of their task was all too apparent. With the sea rushing greedily into her vitals the reluctant order to abandon ship was finally given.

Below decks in the engine room, men looked up from their stations in unbelief. Then, as the order was repeated—this time more urgently—they lay aside their tools for what they knew was the last time and moved obediently to the ladders leading topside. But neither the gallant cruiser or her men were to get off so easily. The Jap, still lurking nearby, sent a second torpedo crashing into the bowels of the helpless ship.

One of those clambering up the ladder at the time of the second explosion was Machinist's Mate Gene Bearden. He and the men about him were ripped from their places by the force of the blow, hurled this

way and that, dashed violently to the steel decks of the cruiser. To this day that is the last thing Bearden remembers. Mercifully, he lost consciousness.

Someone (an officer, he was later told), happened by at that moment to spot Bearden among his torn and dying shipmates. In some manner, the heroic officer got his unconscious burden up a crumpled ladder, on deck and into a rubber life raft.

There, for some forty-eight hours, Bearden clung desperately to the tiny spark of life within him, knowing nothing of his ship, his mates or his own near-fatal wounds. Seventeen minutes after the first torpedo had struck, the *Helena* sank beneath the waves, carrying with her some four hundred of her crew of six hundred.

But Fate, which had apparently turned its back on Bearden, now essayed a slight nod in his direction. The occupants of the tiny raft were picked up by a United States destroyer and soon Gene was on his way back to the States and a naval hospital near Jacksonville, Florida.

The hospital medicos shook their heads in wonder at the extent of Bearden's injuries. His skull had been gouged open, a kneecap hopelessly crushed. Bearden, who had been a professional ball player, was told he would never play again.

Yet someone—and again, strangely, Gene doesn't remember the name of his savior—a doctor with the ingenuity and near-recklessness of the genius-breed, happened along. He told the despairing boy that, with luck, he might be able to return him to the New York

Yankee chain where he had been when war broke out. With this his only hope of resuming the game he loved, Bearden submitted to a series of operations that covered he doesn't know how many months. An aluminum cap and screw were inserted into the mangled knee and the twisted and torn ligaments made fast. Another aluminum plate was fitted to his skull to replace the bone Gene had left aboard the *Helena*.

Bearden spent months recuperating, the hope and belief that someday he would be pitching again giving him the courage to endure the ordeal. After many weeks came the day he got up out of bed. Then, after more interminable weeks and months, came the greatest day of all. Gene lay aside his crutches and walked again!

He couldn't get out of the naval hospital fast enough. With the ink on his discharge papers hardly dry, he hurried to the Binghamton farm club of the New York Yankees and went back to work. He was alive again.

But it wasn't as easy as all that. Plenty of discouragement and despair and hard work lay between Gene and his dream of being a big-league pitching star. Whether because of his injury, or because his fast ball wasn't considered good enough for the majors, the Yankees no longer wanted him and he was traded to the Cleveland Indians along with Hal Peck and Alan Gettel for Ray Mack and Sherman Lollar. In this case Bearden's benefactor was Casey Stengel, for whom Gene later won fifteen and lost four with Oakland in the Pacific Coast League. It was Stengel who told Cleveland owner Bill



Veeck to take young Bearden in preference to the other pitchers on his staff.

That spring of 1947, Gene reported to the Indians' Arizona training camp full of determination and high hopes. He'd show these major-leaguers whether or not he had a good enough fast ball! Well, Gene showed them, and then he showed them some more, and then he went back to the minors again—this time to Baltimore.

There, whether out of disappointment or anger at himself over his major-league failure, Bearden became his own worst enemy. His disposition soured, his control went bad and his fast ball barely limped to the plate. Seven innings of International League pitching saw him tagged with a total of eight runs. By now Gene's frustration and bewildered wrath were such that he got into a couple of brushes with Oriole manager Tommy Thompson which resulted in his suspension. Not one to accept such punishment gracefully, Gene slammed out of the Baltimore clubhouse and back to his home in California. As far as Bearden was concerned baseball could go hang and evidently baseball—or rather the Cleveland owners—felt the same way about Bearden.

But once more a friend, again kindly Casey Stengel, intervened. "Ol' Case" pleaded with Bill Veeck to let him have the Bearden kid back again and finally Veeck gave in. Back to Oakland went Gene and back into the winning column went his name.

At this point in his career Gene gives a major portion

of the credit for his success to an Oakland catcher, Bill Raimondi. "I wasn't getting by all the time on my fast ball," Gene confessed, "so Bill got me working on a knuckler. He kept calling for the pitch so I kept throwing it. Of course I was plenty wild with it at first, but when I finally got the knack of throwing it I could put it pretty much where I wanted."

Gene finished the season with a 16 and 7 mark at Oakland. He was set for another try at the majors and this time he vowed he was going to make it.

Skip to May 8, 1948. Having survived the rigors and squad cuts of training camp, Bearden was after a job as number three Indian starting pitcher behind Bob Feller and converted outfielder Bob Lemon. Manager Lou Boudreau<sup>1</sup> had named his rookie southpaw to hurl against the Washington Senators and that is exactly what he did. Bearden allowed a total of three hits and the Indians won the game, 6-1.

Bearden went on to win nineteen games with the Indians in this, his rookie year. His control was astounding and his famed knuckler the talk of the league. With Bob Feller off to an inexplicably slow start, it was largely Bearden and Bob Lemon who kept the Indians in a contending position during the season. Working principally at night when his knuckler is most effective, Gene notched victory after victory over the other pennant contenders, including the New York Yankees, who once had him and gave him up.

Through the summer and fall of 1948 the American

<sup>1</sup>See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Ninth Series.

League battled through the tightest race in its history. Up until the middle of September, any one of five teams could have won the flag. Then the pace began to tell and the amazing Philadelphia Athletics and Detroit Tigers dropped back, leaving the front-running to the Indians, Boston Red Sox and New York Yankees. With four games remaining to be played, Cleveland enjoyed a two-game lead and as the teams settled down to the final weekend of the season, the Indians still needed at least one victory to assure themselves of a tie with the Red Sox or Yanks who were settling things at Fenway Park, Boston, that Saturday and Sunday.

Once again it was the Cleveland southpaw with the aluminum plate in his head and the raw steel in his pitching arm who saved Cleveland's pennant. Pitching on the next to last day of the season, Bearden shut out the dangerous Detroit Tigers as the Red Sox were eliminating the New York Yankees. And that is the way the regular season wound up one day later, locked together in the first dead heat the American League had ever known. With the Boston Braves already in as National League winners, the baseball eyes of the nation centered on that city's Fenway Park where on Monday, Oct. 4, Cleveland and the Red Sox would clash in a single game to decide the American League representative in the World Series.

With everything riding on this all-important game, both managers were on a spot insofar as pitching selections were concerned. The past hectic weeks of the American League campaign had seen pitching sched-

ules and regular rotation completely upset as starters and relievers were thrown into the breach to pull out games for Lou Boudreau and Joe McCarthy. Of the Indians, Feller and Lemon hadn't been sufficiently rested to risk starting either of them in Monday's play-off. And Bearden, the Indians' southpaw sensation, had worked a full nine innings the day before. Satchel Paige? Steve Gromek? Sam Zoldak? Boudreau had to make perhaps the toughest decision of his managerial career.

And what of the Red Sox? Joe Dobson had just worked against the Yankees. Mickey Harris and Dave Ferriss,<sup>2</sup> the in-and-out comeback pitchers, were too unreliable to be trusted with a game of such importance. Mel Parnell had apparently lost his stuff his past few times out. Earl Johnson or Tex Hughson? Ready for a few innings of relief work, at best.

That Monday afternoon 33,957 tense, expectant persons crowded themselves into every nook and corner of Fenway Park, while thousands more clamored fruitlessly for admission. The crowd sat restlessly through batting drill and infield practice, one question on everyone's lips. Who would be the starting pitchers?

Finally the grounds keepers appeared and began dragging the infield and chalking the batter's box as players of both teams retired to their respective dug-outs. Then a whisper of surprise riffled through the packed thousands and swelled to a great murmur as two familiar figures emerged from the Red Sox dug-

<sup>2</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Tenth Series.

out behind first base and walked to the warm-up spot to the right of home plate. The first was second-string catcher Matt Batts; the second, Denny Galehouse, the Sox' ageing yet crafty right hander who had enjoyed such notable success during the regular campaign against the hard-hitting Yankees.

Now one question had been answered and all eyes turned to the Cleveland dugout. Up the steps came a tallish, familiar figure and as he was instantly recognized, the murmur of surprise became a roar of unbelief as the packed thousands watched Gene Bearden begin taking his slow, warm-up throws. Red Sox players, favored in the betting odds for the play-off game, watched with grim satisfaction as they noted Bearden's obvious effort to conserve strength in the arm-loosening process. Working with one day's rest, is he? they seemed to be saying. We'll have him out of there and getting all the rest he needs inside of three innings!

Cocky, the Red Sox great took their positions in the field—Williams,<sup>3</sup> Doerr,<sup>4</sup> Pesky, Stephens, DiMaggio,<sup>5</sup> Tebbetts. They'd murder the tired Bearden! Just wait till they came to bat. First, however, there was the slight matter of retiring the Indians in their half of the first.

The game started out very much to the Red Sox' liking. Lead-off man Dale Mitchell was retired on a fly to Williams. Allie Clark, a surprise starter at first because of his right-handed hitting power against Fenway

<sup>3</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Eighth Series.

<sup>4</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Tenth Series.

<sup>5</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Tenth Series.

Park's chummy left-field fence, bounced out, Pesky to Billy Goodman. Just one more man to retire and the Red Sox could have their crack at Bearden. But the next man was Lou Boudreau and the fiery manager of the Indians has a way of coming through when the chips are down. He picked out a Galehouse offering to his liking and rocketed it into the screen atop the left-field wall for a lusty home run and the Indians led, 1-0.

After Joe Gordon had been retired on a grounder to Junior Stephens, the eager Sox made for their bat rack. One run, eh? They'd get that back in no time. That and a couple extra for good luck. Right away it looked as though they might at that. After Dom DiMaggio had gone out, Boudreau to Clark, jut-jawed Johnny Pesky nailed a double into the right-field corner. Again Boudreau came through, getting the dangerous Ted Williams on a slow hopper. But then Junior Stephens, "Little Slug" as he is known to his teammates, jarred Bearden for a single that scored Pesky with the tying run.

The crowd was in an uproar as Boudreau called time to have a talk with Bearden. How did he feel? Did he want to stay in? Bearden nodded grimly. Satisfied, Boudreau trotted back to his position to watch his pitcher end the inning by retiring Bobby Doerr, Keltner to Clark.

The Indians were scoreless in the second. So were the Red Sox, despite two bases on balls off Bearden. But Gene hitched up his belt and struck out Billy Goodman as catcher Jim Hegan threw out Stan Spence

stealing. Then, after a scoreless third, Indian bats roared. Boudreau and Gordon led off with singles and brawny Ken Keltner connected for a massive round-tripper to score three more Cleveland runs. Another run came home before Galehouse could retire the side.

Now Bearden had a four-run lead and he seemed to be working more easily. He set down the Red Sox in order in the next two innings. In the fifth, Cleveland got another run on the irrepressible Boudreau's second home run and third hit of the afternoon. That made it 6-1. But the Red Sox were far from finished. In their sixth Captain Bobby Doerr lashed a Bearden pitch out of the park with Ted Williams on base to narrow the margin to 6-3. But that's all they got. While Cleveland was getting a pair of unneeded "insurance" runs, Bearden continued to check the Red Sox batters. Five hits was all they got off him as, pitching his second complete game in forty-eight hours, he hurled the Indians to their first pennant in twenty-eight long years.

Cleveland's newest baseball hero was born in Lexa, Arkansas, Sept. 5, 1920. Gene's father, a master mechanic with the Missouri Pacific Railroad, had taken a fling at minor-league baseball in Fort Worth and had, in fact, done well enough to have been sold to the Pittsburgh Pirates. However, uncertainties of his baseball future weighed against his assured income as a railroad man prompted him to turn his back on the national pastime.

Henceforth, the elder Bearden stuck to railroading, despite the constant moving of the family home his

job entailed. With his father's professional baseball background, it was only natural that young Gene be given a ball glove only shortly after he cast aside his teething ring. During the course of his high schooling in Memphis, Tennessee, young Bearden showed considerable promise as a first baseman. However, Henry Bearden saw in his son's powerful throwing arm something far too valuable to be wasted in the routine throws of an infielder. Accordingly, Young Gene, at his father's urging, concentrated on becoming a pitcher.

The change was hardly accomplished overnight. There followed long afternoon and evening sessions between the two Beardens, father and son, when time could be taken from railroading or homework. But Gene stuck at his pitching and gradually began to show improvement. In 1939 at a baseball school in Little Rock, he attracted the attention of the Philadelphia Phillies who signed him to a contract. At last he was a professional baseball player—and what meant even more, the property of a major-league team. With all the brash confidence of youth, Gene practically expected to make the National League overnight.

But the next three years saw him toiling deep in the anonymity of the minors at Moultrie and Miami Beach. In 1942, after he had won seventeen games at Miami Beach, the Phillies wanted to send him to Ottawa. But Gene refused to go. In the first place, his mother had become ill. And second, young Bearden was dissatisfied with the salary offered him.

So, the stubborn young pitcher—he was then nearly



twenty-two—went home and shortly thereafter received his release from the Philadelphia club.

It was Johnny Nee who signed him for the New York Yankee organization in whose chain he saw limited service at Newark and Augusta before World War II put all thoughts of a baseball career from immediate realization.

Skip now, if you will, the war years, Gene's near fatal injuries, his rescue and the remarkable fight he won back to health. The scene is Cleveland's vast, sprawling Municipal Stadium where the Indians, thanks largely to the twenty victories achieved by the brilliant young southpaw in his freshman season, are ready to meet the Boston Braves in the third game of the 1948 World Series. The Braves, behind Johnny Sain, have already won the opening game in Boston, despite Bob Feller's magnificent two-hit pitching. The Indians, behind Bob Lemon, have taken the second game, 4-1. And now the teams are here in Cleveland, ready for the all-important third game—the game that will have to see one of the contestants taking a 2-1 lead in the series. On the mound to start the crucial battle are the two B rookies, Bickford for Boston and Bearden for the Indians. In the stands as Gene takes his warm-up throws preparatory to starting his first World Series game, are 70,306 rabid fans crackling the very atmosphere with their tense, ill-contained excitement.

In the first inning, Tommy Holmes, Boston lead-off hitter, slashed a grounder to the left which Lou Bou-

dreau scooped up on one hop and fired to Eddie Robinson for the putout. Next up was the highly touted rookie, Alvin Dark. Gene got him swinging on a two-and-two pitch. Mike McCormick waved feebly at three knucklers and sat down. Bearden grinned and walked off the field as the huge crowd roared its acclaim. But the Indians could do nothing with Bickford in their half of the first and Gene went back to the mound to start the second. He got the dangerous Bob Elliott on a grounder to Ken Keltner, but then the veteran Frank McCormick singled sharply for the first hit of the game. With the tension mounting on every pitch, Bearden went to work. He got Clint Conatser on a comeback ball and Phil Masi on a fly to Dale Mitchell.

But Cleveland could again do nothing with young Mr. Bickford and Gene went out to put down the Braves in their half of the third. Came the Cleveland half of the inning and Bearden decided to do something about the hitless, runless skein Bickford was running up. After catcher Jim Hegan had popped out to Phil Masi to open the half-inning, Gene came to bat and promptly belted a long double over right fielder Tommy Holmes' head, the ball bouncing off the wire fence some 335 feet away. After Dale Mitchell walked, Larry Doby, the great Cleveland rookie outfielder, rapped a double-play ball at Stanky who threw to Dark, forcing Mitchell. Running hard on the play, Bearden came in to score the first run of the game when Dark's relay to first went into the Cleveland dugout. However, the inning ended without further scoring.

Bearden's remarkable coolness under fire came to light in the fourth. After Mike McCormick had opened the inning with a single to center, he got Elliott on a short fly to Doby and then started an inning-ending double play when he grabbed Frank McCormick's tap and fired to second.

The Indians counted again in their half of the fourth. After Keltner walked, Judnich struck out. But Ed Robinson picked on Bickford's first pitch and sent it screaming into left field, Keltner stopping at second. Jim Hegan came through with another hit, scoring Keltner. Despite a single by Bearden for his second hit of the day, relief pitcher Bill Voiselle got the Indians out without further scoring.

Now Bearden and Voiselle settled down to a string of runless innings. The fifth came and went. And the sixth and then the seventh. Still no score as Bearden clung grimly to his 2-0 lead. Now Gene really went to work. Mixing up his famed knuckler with occasional sliders and fastballs, he retired the last six men to face him, throwing out Masi and Eddie Stanky himself, striking out pinch hitter Connie Ryan, and then winding up by getting Holmes on a hopper back to the box, Dark on a grounder to second and Mike McCormick on a pop up to shortstop Lou Boudreau. Once again the Indians' clutch pitcher had come through and given his team an all important lead in the series.

In the clubhouse after the game, Boudreau hailed Bearden's performance as his best game of the season. "He had it today," the Indian manager told reporters.

"He pitched a great game in the play-off against the Red Sox but the pressure was on him that day. Today he was putting his knuckler where he wanted it and he was unbeatable."

But there remained more for the Indians' clutch pitcher to accomplish before the World Championship was secured to the Cleveland masthead. After surprise starter Steve Gromek had outpitched Johnny Sain the following day to give Cleveland an apparently insurmountable series lead, the Braves broke out of their battling silence with the greatest display of power hitting the series had seen. In a game that saw five home runs blasted out of the park, the Braves forced a continuation of the classic by scalping the Indians, 11-5. And with the series moving back to Boston for as many remaining games as were necessary, many felt the Braves would be enjoying whatever psychological advantage there was. After all, hadn't they just beaten the supposedly hard-hitting Indians at their own game—power baseball?

For the sixth game of the series, the starting pitchers were Bob Lemon, who had already won one of the Cleveland games, and Bill Voiselle, whose relief pitching in the third game had been overshadowed only by Bearden's brilliance. And with the Braves fighting desperately to keep the series alive, the game slid by, inning after inning. The Indians had given Lemon a one-run lead in the third which the Braves had matched in their half of the fourth. In the sixth Cleveland went two runs up on Joe Gordon's homer and a hit by Ed

Robinson. They added another in the eighth and, to all intents, had the game safely sewed up. But in the Boston half of the eighth, the Braves began to get to the tiring Lemon. Tommy Holmes had singled, Earl Torgeson had doubled and Bob Elliott had walked for one run when Manager Boudreau called time and motioned to his bull pen.

Because of the layout of the playing field, the Cleveland bull pen had been moved to a position where it was behind a huge billboard in left center field. Everyone present saw Boudreau raise his glove hand, the signal for a left-hander to come in. Who could the new pitcher be? Sam Zoldak? It was a foregone conclusion that Bearden was being saved to pitch tomorrow's game should the Braves pull this one out of the fire. Yet here came the same tall, familiar figure, striding in from the bull pen, jacket over his arm. Once again the Indians needed Gene Bearden and once again he was coming in to aid his club.

The way Bearden saved that game and insured Cleveland's World Series triumph, just as he had insured their play-off victory and prior to that their appearance in the play-off, is well known baseball history. How the now over-worked southpaw slammed the door shut in the faces of the embattled Braves need not be detailed here. Yet shut it he did, with the tying and winning runs on second and third in one of the greatest exhibitions of clutch pitching the baseball world had ever seen. And when left fielder Bob Kennedy tucked

away the final out in the Boston ninth, Cleveland and all the rest of fandom went crazy.

After the game, when some degree of sanity had returned to the Cleveland locker room and it was almost possible to hear oneself think, Lou Boudreau paid his pitcher probably the greatest compliment of his career. "It was all Gene," he kept telling newspapermen. "All Bearden. He's won for us all season long and he won for us again today. You know I don't like to single out players, but this time Bearden has got to have all the credit. He did a great job and it's his game and his series."

For the record, here is what rookie Gene Bearden accomplished in his first World Series, after having hung up 20 victories in his first year of major-league play: Pitched in 2 games, 1 complete; worked 10  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings; allowed 0 runs, 6 hits, 1 base on balls, struck out 4, won 1 game, saved another.

Small wonder, then, that he is regarded by many as all baseball's, let alone Cleveland's, pitching man of the year.

## HENRY EUGENE BEARDEN

Born, Lexa, Arkansas, Sept. 5, 1920.

Bats left. Throws left. Height, 6' 3". Weight, 200 pounds.

Year	Club	League	G	IP	W	L	Pct.	SO	BB	H	Avg.
1939	Moultrie	Ga.-Fla.	29	168	5	11	.313	106	91	192	3.48
1940	Miami Beach	Fla. E.C.	38	238	18	10	.643	166	70	189	1.63
1941	Miami Beach	Fla. E.C.	30	214	17	7	.708	91	58	202	2.41
1942	Sav.-Augusta	S.A.L.	13	60	4	4	.500	18	38	68	4.50
1943-1944 in U.S. Military Service											
1945	Binghamton	E.L.	23	179	15	5	.750	60	72	183	2.41
1946	Oakland	P.C.L.	32	167	15	4	.789	81	75	139	3.13
1947	Baltimore	I.L.	3	7	0	2	.000	2	1	12	10.29
1947	Oakland	P.C.L.	26	198	16	7	.696	80	82	185	2.86
1947	Cleveland	A.L.	1	1/3	0	0	.000	0	1	2	81.00
1948	Cleveland	A.L.	37	230	20	7	.741	80	106	187	2.43*

Complete major league totals

2 yrs.

38 230 $\frac{1}{3}$  20 7 .741 80 107 189 2.54

## WORLD SERIES RECORD

1948 Cleveland A.L. 2 10 $\frac{2}{3}$  1 0 1.000 4 1 6 0.00

\* Indicates led league or was tied for league leadership.

Outstanding performances: Led Florida-East Coast League in earned-run-average and shutouts (5) in 1940. Led American League in earned-run-average (1948). Won play-off from Boston Red Sox, 8-3, Oct. 4, 1948.

RICHARD (DICK) BUTTON AND  
BARBARA ANN SCOTT

*“Teen-Age Champions of the Ice”*







RICHARD (DICK) BUTTON



BARBARA ANN SCOTT



## CHAPTER IV

RICHARD (DICK) .BUTTON AND BARBARA ANN SCOTT  
"TEEN-AGE CHAMPIONS OF THE ICE"

THE year 1948 was the occasion for two outstanding achievements in the world of sport. From St. Moritz, Davos and Stockholm, a pair of teen-age North Americans brought back to this continent the world's major figure-skating titles, respectively the men's and women's Olympic, European and World Championships.

In sports, unlike other fields of expression where child prodigies and geniuses are not uncommon, the winning of championships and top honors in any particular field of competition usually comes only after the attainment of physical maturity. The reason is obvious. Physically, boys cannot, as a rule, compete successfully with men, nor can girls with women. Years of training must pass before the neophyte can compete on anything resembling an equal footing. Skills, and more important, stamina must be acquired, and it is a recognized fact in sports that necessary stamina does not usually accompany extreme youth.

True, there have been exceptions. Bob Mathias won the Olympic decathlon while still a teen-age schoolboy, and Bob Feller, Mel Ott<sup>1</sup> and Phil Cavarretta were

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Seventh Series.

major-league regulars well in advance of reaching their twentieth birthdays. Yet, because of the rarity with which these instances occur, they are always accorded the acclaim and attention reserved for outstanding individual achievements.

Barbara Ann Scott of Ottawa, Canada, and Richard Button of Englewood, New Jersey, are younglings who have reached the peak in one of the sports world's most exacting and most vigorously contested fields.

Barbara Ann always wanted to be a figure-skating champion. Given her first pair of ice skates when she was six ("and they were not double-runners" she insists), she turned to the practice rink with a zeal and stick-to-it-iveness one would not ordinarily expect to find in such a young child. Barbara Ann's father, Clyde Scott, had always been anxious for his daughter to be a champion. Possibly that was just normal pride and hope for an unusually attractive child. Perhaps, though, it was partly the outcome of the father's terrible experience in the first world war.

In April of 1915, thirteen years before Barbara Ann was born, Lieutenant Clyde Scott of the Second Canadian Battalion lay badly wounded on the battlefield of St. Julien. Hit by shrapnel and machine-gun fire, he was discovered by accident when a German search party came across his body among a litter of corpses. He was taken to a German hospital, where he spent the next two years.

Released in 1917, after memorial services had been

held for him at Perth, Ontario, he returned to Canada where he married Mary Derbyshire. Although rated 75% invalid by the army, Scott, now a colonel, served as secretary to the Department of National Defense, frequently working eighteen to twenty hours a day in his office. An avid sportsman before the war, he refused to accept the life of an invalid. He even managed to play a few holes of golf now and then. In 1934, when she was five years old, it was not an uncommon sight for little Barbara Ann to be observed tagging around the course after her dad.

From him she received her early start in athletics. She learned to swim in two weeks. She climbed trees, rode horseback, learned to play golf—indicating an early proficiency in every activity. Once she received her first skates, however, interest in other sports faded from the little girl's mind.

Although her parents were not well to do, they encouraged Barbara Ann's talents as far as they were able. Shortly after she began skating at outdoor rinks, her father got her into Ottawa's famed Minto Skating Club. Between hours on the ice, she attended the Ottawa Normal Model School. Enjoying the life of any ordinary little girl, she had numerous pets—cats, dogs, birds, rabbits, even white mice. She took piano lessons.

By the time she was nine, Barbara Ann was completely devoted to figure skating. She was taken out of school and her education placed in the hands of a private tutor. For two and a half hours each morning she

was schooled by a Miss Seeley, who also tutored the grandchildren of Princess Alice and the Governor General.

By far the major share of Barbara Ann's time, however, was spent at the Minto Skating Club. She devised her own practice schedule, refusing to leave the ice until she had completed the prescribed routine she had set herself. Frequently she was knocked off her feet by larger children racing heedlessly through her figure patterns. Each time it happened, the blond, blue-eyed little girl would pick herself up without protest and go back to what she had been doing.

When she was eight, Barbara Ann played the Spirit of the New Year in the Minto Follies and the Ottawa Journal called her "the darling of the show." Two years later she passed her eight basic school figures, thereby becoming the youngest Canadian girl ever to win the skating gold medal. Then she went to Lake Placid where she took seven out of eight American tests successfully. The following year, competing against eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds, she won the Canadian Junior Championship.

That made her a senior and as such she had to compete against the best figure skaters there were. Although but twelve, she was runner-up in the 1941 championships. Apparently well on her way toward achieving her and her father's goal of a national and then a world title, Barbara Ann suffered a serious loss. In September of '41, Clyde Scott passed away and his daughter's heart was almost broken. Despite her sorrow,

Barbara Ann competed the following year, again repeating as runner-up. She was all of thirteen. In 1944 she won the Canadian National Championship.

As more and more honors began to come her way, Barbara Ann's practice hours increased. It is estimated that she skated the equivalent of eleven miles a day at the Minto Club on school figures alone. A perfectionist, she spent hours mastering the required figures and routines that were eventually to win her international and Olympic titles. Barbara Ann is conservative in the composition of her "free" programs, considering it greater wisdom to execute perfectly a single jump than to essay a double jump and miss.

Shortly after winning the Canadian National Championship, Barbara Ann and her mother moved to a top-floor apartment in mid-town Ottawa. Barbara Ann's lessons and the cost of her expensive figure skates (\$60 for boots and an additional \$30 for blades) made the problem of subsisting on her father's pension a very difficult one. But by now her fellow members at the Minto Club were becoming increasingly aware of the future champion in their midst. With the loyalty and generosity that has long typified the support she has received at home, Barbara Ann's neighbors and townspeople began to contribute toward her trips to Vancouver, Seattle and St. Paul. The donations ranged from large sums to the coins contributed by Ottawa school children.

Barbara Ann has always exercised a strong influence on Canadian school children. One time on the air



she cautioned her youthful listeners that nothing worthwhile could be realized without the necessary hard work. One little fellow, unable to comprehend that Barbara Ann ever made mistakes, summoned sufficient courage to ask her mother about it.

"Indeed she has," was Mrs. Scott's reply. "I can't tell you how many pairs of pants Barbara wore out, landing on her little seat, trying to learn to do what she can do today."

Another little boy played the piano for her. Nervous at first, he took heart when she told him of her numerous mistakes in practice. The result was that he played his piece well enough to go away happy.

By 1947 Barbara Ann's fellow townspeople had decided she was their candidate for Canada's outstanding athlete and the person best qualified to represent their land in foreign competition. Accordingly, when it came time for her to compete at Davos, Switzerland, for the European Championship and for the World's Championship at Stockholm, they collected a sum of almost \$10,000 to cover her expenses. Barbara Ann won both championships, adding up a score unequalled by any amateur figure skater in the world.

In Switzerland she defeated a strong field of nineteen other skaters from seven countries, including the United States champion, Gretchen Merrill. Barbara Ann's final point total was 2,756.8, exactly 110 more than Miss Merrill accumulated. Daphne Walker, the British champion, was third.

Canadian newspapers hailed her achievements.

Plans for a thunderous homecoming were drawn up. The citizens and civic officials of Ottawa planned, among other things, to present her with a brand-new automobile as a token of their gratitude and affection for the magnificent way she had represented them.

Then occurred the famous case of the Buick convertible. Avery Brundage of the United States AAU and a powerful figure in world amateur sports, heard of the intended presentation of the car and warned Barbara Ann that were she to accept, it might seriously jeopardize her amateur standing. Anxious to represent Canada at the 1948 Winter Olympic Games, Barbara Ann swallowed her disappointment and returned the car. Her comment at the time is typical of her fine attitude. She said, in part, "It would be selfish of me to retain the car and lose a chance to bring honor to Canada." Despite the normal excitement of any young girl at being offered such a gift, from the moment of her return from abroad Barbara Ann did little but talk of representing her country at the Olympic Games.

Actually, she began training for the Olympics the night following her victory at Stockholm. There were no celebrations as Barbara Ann adhered to a rigid diet and regimen. She went to bed at her customary early hour.

Home in Canada she was a national heroine. Prime Minister MacKenzie King personally extolled her. She was mobbed wherever she went. The University of Western Ontario in London elected her their sweetheart. Veterans of World War I, the Red Chevrons,

called her to their annual dinner and made her an honorary member of their organization.

In 1948 she realized her fondest wish. Representing her beloved Canada, she won the women's figure skating at the Winter Olympic Games at St. Moritz and a month later successfully defended her World's Championship against thirty-nine competitors from eight countries. She also won another European Championship, this one held at Prague.

Prime Minister MacKenzie King cabled her: "Canada is prouder of you than ever. Once more, warmest congratulations upon winning for the second time the World Championship in figure-skating contests. Your triumph is shared by all your fellow Canadians, who now await your return to accord you a truly national welcome. I extend these congratulations on behalf of the people of Canada. In the world arena of sports you have indeed brought high honor to our country and yourself."

This time, when she returned, Barbara Ann was able to accept the car she had previously been forced to refuse, for she turned professional. And as before, crowds turned out to welcome her. The Canadian House of Commons went so far as to stop all business to pass a resolution approving everything about Barbara Ann Scott!

Shortly after turning professional, she appeared in Boston as one of the featured performers in the Skating Club of Boston's annual show. At the first meeting of the cast, largely composed of club members, she

endeared herself to her fellow skaters by informing them that this was their show and she would do whatever they asked her. Although particularly fond of one of the pieces comprising the show's score, and having previously ear-marked the number for one of her own solos, she immediately rejected it upon learning that club member Tenley Albright had planned to use it herself.

Considerate, unspoiled, gracious, Barbara Ann is every inch a skating champion of whom Canada may be justly proud.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dick Button, the 1948 men's Olympic, world, European and United States figure-skating champion, was born in Englewood, New Jersey on July 18, 1929, the youngest of three sons. His father, president of the Wholesale Typewriter Company in New York, had shown some promise in his youth as a boy speed skater, but aside from that the family knew very little and cared even less about figure skating. Unlike Barbara Ann Scott, Dick didn't even begin to take up figure skating seriously until his twelfth year, and only then because an impatient teacher to whom he had gone for a lesson told him flatly he'd never learn to be a figure skater. The unkind prediction angered him. He went home and told his parents about it and his determination to "show" the teacher by becoming a figure skater.

"They thought at first that I was crazy," Dick admits,

"but after they began to get mad, too, they decided to encourage me."

Prior to this incident at the Riverdale Skating Rink, Dick had confined his skating to seasonal outings at the ponds dotting the surrounding neighborhood. After attending public grade school in Englewood, he shifted to Englewood School for Boys—a private day school of perhaps 160 pupils whose curriculum permitted him a maximum of time for skating lessons. Once Dick had made up his mind he wanted to be a figure skater, he went at the job vigorously. First to be won over was his father. At first the elder Button considered his son's desire to figure skate a bit on the sissy side, but he became a staunch supporter of Dick's the first time he saw him on the ice.

The summer Dick turned thirteen the Buttons went to Lake Placid. There, while the rest of the family vacationed, Dick began taking lessons from one of the several instructors at the famed resort. He worked under his coach for several weeks with indifferent success. Then he made a change, and it turned out to be an important one.

One day Dick noticed with admiration the results being achieved by one of the other coaches. This man was Gus Lussi, a naturalized Swiss who divided his time between the lumber business and coaching figure skating. Dick liked the way Lussi worked with his pupils and decided almost immediately he wanted to be taught by the Swiss.

"Whatever training I had had before I started with Lussi was immaterial," Dick admits.

Under Lussi's tutelage, young Button settled down to serious training. During the winter months Lussi taught at the Philadelphia Skating Club and Humane Society—incidentally, the oldest skating club in America—and it wasn't long before Dick was going there for lessons during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. When he was in the eighth grade, he took a week and a half off, each vacation increasing the time spent with Lussi until, when he had reached his senior year, he was spending as much as three months away from school.

"They were wonderful to me at the Englewood School," Dick recalls. "They sanctioned my interest in figure skating, even giving me extra help during semesters so that I might keep up with my studies. You see, I wanted to be certain of getting into college."

Meanwhile, the hours of practice with Lussi continued. "I don't suppose I got more than four compliments on my skating from Gus in the first five years he worked with me," Dick admits. Nevertheless, the hours of work began bearing fruit. In 1943, when he was thirteen, Dick won the Middle Atlantic Novice Championships in New York and placed second in the Eastern States Novice at New Haven. In 1944 at Lake Placid he won the Eastern States Junior Championship as well as the National Novice at Minneapolis. The following year it was the Eastern States Senior Cham-

pionship and the National Junior Championship. In 1946 he won both the Eastern States Senior and the National Senior crowns.

Meanwhile, the summer lessons at Lake Placid and the winter tutoring at the Philadelphia Skating Club continued. Dick joined the latter when he was fourteen and has skated for it ever since. Dick's loyalty to his teacher Lussi is illustrated by an incident of those early competitive years. Another, and more exclusive club (which shall be nameless) saw a potential champion in the young figure skater and endeavored to sign him to an attractive membership. The only stipulation was that he cease taking lessons from Lussi. Dick refused and his father backed him up. As long as the elder Button was paying for his son's lessons, the matter of from whom he received his instruction was for Dick and no one else to decide.

With the national honors he was winning, the hours of instruction gradually lengthened until, by Dick's estimate, he was averaging between fifteen to twenty hours a week on ice. He graduated from Englewood School for Boys in June of 1947. While there, his athletic participation had been limited to football, in which he won his letter, and to baseball, in which he did not.

"Usually by the time spring semester rolled around I was too busy catching up with my school work to do much of anything else," he explains.

Dick had gone to his father with a request that he be allowed to stay out of school a full year before entering

college. Chief reason for this was a desire to travel and compete in the World Championships at Stockholm. With his father's permission, Dick then applied to Yale University for admission and, on his Englewood scholastic record, was accepted. However, once the authorities at New Haven were appraised of his intention to mix competitive figure skating with his undergraduate work, they shook their heads. Such a program was unthinkable, they told him. So Dick made an application to Harvard, where he was speedily accepted.

"They told me I could do whatever I liked in my spare time just so long as I kept up with my studies. Luckily for me, I've always been able to study best when I'm competing in figure-skating championships."

In 1947, with his parents' approval, Dick went abroad to compete in the World Championships at Stockholm. He placed second. He won the North American Championships at Ottawa and the National Senior Championships. The following year he swept the world's major titles, winning the Olympic crown at St. Moritz before the proud eyes of his mother and father, the World Championship at Davos, the European Championship at Prague and the National Championship in California.

The boat that brought Dick home from Europe after the Olympics docked in the United States on a Wednesday. The Nationals started the next day in California.

"I flew out but I didn't get any sleep," Dick explained. "I won but I was plenty bushed."



Dick had a rather interesting experience after winning the European Championship in Prague. He and some of the other skaters stayed over to give an exhibition which was held, oddly enough, the day following the Communist coup. During his solo appearance, someone in the stands threw an orange on the ice.

"I thought it was some sort of Czechoslovakian raspberry so I threw it back," Dick explains. "Pretty soon another came flying across the ice. When I bent over to pick it up I noticed some printing on the cellophane wrapper. It said 'Good luck, Mr. Button.'"

Another experience relates to his preparation for the Olympics. Always Dick had had trouble executing what is known as a double axle jump—a skating maneuver involving two and a half complete turns from a forward take off and finishing with a backward landing. Practically every time he tried the jump he landed heavily on one hip. Worried that his son might break the hip by thus persisting, Dick's father tried to get him to stop but again Dick's stubbornness won out. He made his first successful double axle in practice just three days before the start of the Winter Olympics.

Despite the thrill of competing for his country in the Olympics, Dick has carefully schooled himself not to become nervous during competition. He explains, quite simply, "When you really like something, you don't get nervous about it."

Before this lesson was learned Dick had one unfortunate experience. Competing in one of the major championships, he built up such a sizable lead over his com-

petitors in the required figures that he felt himself a certain winner. Then he began to worry about completing a creditable job. He worried himself into such a nervous state that he gave what was, for Button, an uninspired performance in the "free" skating and, in his own words, "botched up the job." He has never allowed himself to grow nervous since.

Despite Dick's sweep of the major skating titles, he continues to take lessons. Unlike golf, where a slice or a hook will tell the player what he is doing wrong, a figure skater has no way of correcting flaws of technique except through the eyes of a teacher. In 1949 and despite the added hardship of his freshman studies at Harvard, Dick continued his dominance of men's figure skating. He won the North American Championships at Philadelphia, the World Championship in Paris and the National Championship in Colorado Springs.

For all his seriousness about figure skating and the hours he devotes to the sport, Dick is far from one-sided. In his freshman year at Harvard he was sufficiently well thought of by his classmates to be elected to the student council. As a freshman he was also the recipient of an unprecedented Harvard award. One day William J. Bingham, Harvard's director of athletics, summoned Dick to his office.

"I thought it was a reminder to get in the required hours of freshman physical training," Dick admits, "so I wasn't any too keen about going. When I got there you can imagine my surprise when Mr. Bing-

ham told me I had been awarded a major "H" in recognition of my World Championships."

One of the nicest honors presented him occurred at Lake Placid in the fall of 1947, just prior to his departure for Europe and the Olympics. The Mohawk Indians on nearby St. Regis Reservation, after full ceremony, inducted Dick into their tribe. They conferred on him the name of Jo-wats-ta-ga-we, meaning sea gull. Having seen Button in practice at Lake Placid, the Indians had been reminded of a gull in flight and since, according to Indian legend, the gull is supposed to fly to the four corners of the earth, it was their way of wishing him luck on his world travels.

Careful about his training, Dick neither smokes nor drinks. He tries to keep his weight steady at a figure around one hundred and sixty-five. Inclined to put on poundage, he no longer has the time in training for weight reducing. Consequently, the simplest thing is to stay close to competing condition. The demands of his skating have forced curtailment of other activities. After some twelve years of lessons, Dick has had to give up piano in order to have sufficient time for practice on the ice.

Some years ago Dick introduced his older brother, George, to a former skating partner, Elizabeth Jean Higgins, who had at one time been Junior Pairs Champion. After she and George became engaged, Elizabeth got him out on the ice, albeit reluctantly, in a pair of Dick's expensive figure skates. According to Dick's report, brother George essayed several unsteady strides before folding up on the ice like an ac-

cordion. Without deigning to scramble to his feet, he crawled patiently off the ice on all fours and immediately removed the skates.

"I doubt if he's had them on since," Dick admits a bit sadly, "so I guess the skating in the family is up to me." As far as the United States is concerned, it would be difficult to imagine a happier arrangement.

# **RICHARD BUTTON**

Born Englewood, New Jersey, July 18, 1929.

- 1943 Middle Atlantic Novice Champion
- 1944 Eastern States Junior Champion  
National Novice Champion
- 1945 Eastern States Senior Champion  
National Junior Champion
- 1946 Eastern States Senior Champion  
National Senior Champion
- 1947 National Men's Champion  
North American Champion
- 1948 National Men's Champion  
Men's Olympic Champion  
Men's World Champion  
Men's European Champion
- 1949 Men's World Champion  
Men's North American Champion  
National Men's Champion

# **BARBARA ANN SCOTT**

Born Ottawa, Canada, May 9, 1928.

- 1940 Canadian Junior Champion
- 1941 Runner-up Canadian Champion
- 1942 Runner-up Canadian Champion
- 1944 Canadian Champion
- 1945 Canadian Champion  
North American Champion
- 1946 Canadian Champion
- 1947 European Champion  
World Champion  
North American Champion
- 1948 Olympic Champion  
World Champion  
European Champion



ALVIN RALPH (AL) DARK  
*“Bright Star of the Boston Braves”*





ALVIN RALPH (AL) DARK





## CHAPTER V

ALVIN RALPH (AL) DARK

"BRIGHT STAR OF THE BOSTON BRAVES"

A BOY of six lay fighting for his life on a bed in his Comanche, Oklahoma home. He had been weakened by successive bouts with malaria, pneumonia and diphtheria, and attending physicians despaired of his recovery. Even should his slim chance for survival be realized, doctors warned the boy's parents, their son would be invalided for life.

They reckoned, however, without the boy's own courage and great fighting heart. From his earliest youth Al Dark was a fierce competitor, one of the finest in modern sports annals. The manner in which he licked his illnesses and built himself up to become a top-flight participant in not one but many sports is a tale of amazing perseverance and determination.

Alvin Ralph Dark was born in Comanche, Oklahoma on January 7, 1923. His father, a production man in the oil business, had also been born in the Sooner State. Grandfather Dark had come to the United States from Ireland.

One of four children, two boys and two girls, Al received early athletic encouragement from his father. Several years after the youngster's courageous battle

against illness, when he was about ten years old, his father bought him a baseball and bat. Thereafter, despite his daily hard work in the oil fields, Mr. Dark found time evenings to teach his son the rudiments of baseball. A former semi-pro player, Mr. Dark retained his active interest in the game up to his death in June, 1948.

Shortly after Alvin reached his tenth year, the family moved to Arp, Texas where Mr. Dark had been offered a job as foreman in a newly discovered oil field. Although a bit hard on young Alvin's schooling, the frequent moves were the lot of those connected with the oil business. Before long the Magnolia Oil Company signed Mr. Dark on as supervisor of its tool department in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Here Al grew up and received the major portion of his schooling.

After attending Central Grammar School in Lake Charles, Alvin moved up to Lake Charles High. A grade-school athlete, Al was periodically turned down by the high-school coaches to whom he regularly reported. Although growing normally and gradually regaining his strength after his early illnesses, Al didn't reach the necessary weight to go with his height until his late teens. But by his freshman year at Louisiana State University he weighed 165 pounds.

Lacking a baseball team at Lake Charles High, Al confined his athletic participation to football, basketball and track, in which latter sport his speed made him a natural. Meanwhile he played shortstop with the Lake Charles post team in American Legion junior

baseball. He played five years. After his legion days, he played semi-pro ball in Eunice, Louisiana, traveling fifty miles every Sunday in order to play.

Dark made quite a name for himself in high-school athletics. In 1940 he was All-State and All-Southern interscholastic left halfback. Colleges began bidding for the services of the boy who had once been told he was "too puny" for competitive sports.

Alvin decided to stay in his own backyard. He accepted an athletic scholarship to LSU where, in 1941, he lettered in freshman basketball and football. There was no baseball his first year.

The following year, at the age of nineteen, Al moved up to the varsity football team. He played on the undefeated LSU team of 1942 in a backfield with Steve Van Buren, later of the Philadelphia Eagles of the National Professional Football League, Joe Glamp of the Pittsburgh Steelers, and the late Jeff Burkett of the Chicago Cardinals. Sophomore Dark did the kicking and passing. He was also the team's top breakaway runner.

The LSU Tigers played Fordham in New York that season and Alvin was largely instrumental in LSU's two-touchdown win. Later, in the fifth game of the season, he was injured and saw only limited service from then on. Even so, he was named to several All-American teams and was hailed by his own Coach, Bernie Moore, as the finest player he had ever handled.

His second, and as it developed, last year at Louisiana State, Al played varsity baseball. He hit

around .350 and began to draw the attention of professional baseball as well as football scouts. However, before tying himself up with any team, he enlisted in the U.S. Marines. That was in April, 1942.

At first assigned to the V-12 course at Southwestern Louisiana Institute, Dark remained there from July, 1943 until July of the following year. That football season of 1943 was perhaps Al's greatest. With top professional stars like Weldon Humble, Bill Blackburn and Saxon Judd, SLI put together an undefeatable team. The big game of the year was against the star-studded Randolph Field Flyers. Promised a chance to play in the Sugar Bowl if they won, the SLI team went out and fought the favored Flyers to a standstill. The game was played in a literal sea of mud, under what Alvin later described as "the worst playing conditions I have ever seen." Despite the presence in the Randolph Field line-up of professional and All-America star Glenn Dobbs, the SLI team punched over the only score of the game.

Al had one of his best days in the Oil Bowl game at Houston, Texas, January 1, 1944, as he led SLI to a 24-7 victory over Arkansas A & M. He scored one touchdown, passed to another and kicked three extra points and a field goal.

Although excluded from participation in service baseball by the numerous major-league stars regularly playing, Dark did not confine his athletic participation to football. In the 1944 Southwestern AAU track meet

he finished second in the 100-yard dash with a 9.8 clocking. In addition he won the high jump and placed second in the running broad jump.

From SLI, Al was sent to Quantico, Virginia, where he received a commission as second lieutenant. Shipped overseas, his first stop was Pearl Harbor. He was then transferred to the artillery and sent to Peiping, China. He had little time for athletics during this stage of his service experience.

Separated from the service in June of 1946, Alvin returned home to listen to the offers of the professional baseball and football scouts who had pursued him throughout his college and Marine career. He also became engaged to Adrienne Managan.

Alvin and Adrienne had first met at Trinity Baptist Church when she was twelve and he a budding school-boy athlete. Fellow students, although not classmates, at Lake Charles High School, they became better acquainted through Adrienne's friendship with Al's sister. At the time of their engagement in 1946, their total cash consisted of the \$1,800 Alvin had managed to save from his service pay. Before long, however, they were to be much better off financially. Although Dark did not realize it at the time, the Boston Braves were in the process of making a determined bid for his services.

Just one month earlier, the Braves' chief scout Ted McGrew had surprised his employers and Manager Billy Southworth by urging the Boston club not to go

through with its intended purchase of shortstop Marty Marion<sup>1</sup> from the St. Louis Cardinals. While not challenging the common opinion that Marion was then the best shortstop in baseball, McGrew's words consisted of the simple recommendation to "save your money. Wait a couple of years and I'll have someone better than Marty Marion," he promised.

Southworth, who had managed Marion during the pennant years of 1942, '43 and '44 could hardly believe his ears. Better than Marion? Impossible! But McGrew continued.

"The player I have in mind is Alvin Dark—and probably you've never heard of him. Yet I say that in two years he'll be a better shortstop than Marion, even if he doesn't look like much of a one now. As a matter of fact he hasn't played any minor-league ball. I saw him one year in wartime college baseball, and he wasn't the best-looking fielder I ever saw. But he'll be great.

"Furthermore, gentlemen, he'll cost us a lot of money because if he doesn't play baseball he can make plenty in professional football."

Because they were paying McGrew a good salary for his advice, and probably because they remembered McGrew's recommendation of Brooklyn shortstop Pee Wee Reese<sup>2</sup> some years back, the Braves listened to their chief scout. All McGrew had in the way of a commitment from Dark, he admitted, was the youth's

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Ninth Series.

<sup>2</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Tenth Series.

promise to talk with him before signing with anyone else.

"He has also agreed to work out with Detroit," McGrew concluded.

The scout had first heard of Dark in the spring of 1944. Larry Gilbert, president of the Nashville club of the Southern Association, had mentioned the brilliant young Marine trainee to his friend. The Vols couldn't afford to sign Dark, he said, but a major-league club could—and should. Then with the Philadelphia Phillies, McGrew listened to Gilbert's words. Some time later he went to LaFayette, Louisiana to watch the Southwestern Institute team play.

The day McGrew was in the stands Dark gave a good performance. He was fast, threw hard and accurately and demonstrated an ability to hit to all fields. Yet it wasn't until McGrew talked to the young player after the game that he was convinced he had found another great prospect. What sold McGrew on Dark was his confidence in himself and the love for baseball that shone through his words.

During the war years, the scout came to know the Dark family pretty well. Oddly, his entrée into the Dark home was his ability as an amateur chef rather than his talents as a major-league baseball scout. He exchanged recipes with Mrs. Dark, cooked mouth-watering dishes and eventually won over the family.

"I've never eaten better meals," Mr. Dark admiringly admitted after one of McGrew's masterpieces.



"You have my word that when Al gets out of service he'll talk to you first."

The Giants were playing a series in New York when McGrew called Alvin at his home and asked him how he'd like to make a swing around the National League with the Braves. Although still on terminal leave, Al complied. His heart, however, was still with professional football. Even so, he worked hard on that road trip. Although not overly impressing Southworth with his ability in the field, he made a favorable impression on the Braves' manager with his stick-to-it-iveness. Always the first player on the field and the last to leave, he convinced the manager that he liked the game well enough to work hard at it.

Recalling Dark's tryout, Southworth later admitted the young shortstop had one quality that made his lack of polish seem relatively unimportant. It was Al's competitive instinct. Here was an athlete who could play and do well in almost any sport—the kind of man the wise manager knew would not choke up under pressure.

Before the Braves could make up their minds, Dark left the team. True to his word he went for a tryout with the Detroit Tigers. The day he left the Boston club, General Manager John Quinn called an old friend of his father, Jack McAllister. Formerly an outstanding scout, although now past the age for active duty, McAllister was asked by Quinn to observe Dark's tryout with the Tigers.

While Dark evidently failed to impress the Detroit

owners, he did excite McAllister. On July 3 the scout phoned from Detroit and urged the Braves to sign the recruit—"for any amount he wants."

Owner Lou Perini, a shrewd businessman as well as an avowed baseball fan, hesitated on the other end of the line.

"Tell me, Jack," he asked, "if it were your own money, would you give it to him?"

McAllister's answer was an emphatic "Yes!"

Thus convinced, the Braves went after Dark. Actually, there was no difficulty. They merely asked Dark how much he wanted and when he named his price they agreed. Dark came to Boston where, on July 9 he signed the contract that was to net him in the neighborhood of \$40,000. Dark finished the season with the Braves, getting into fifteen games and hitting .231. Oddly, all of his hits (three) were doubles.

Dark reported to the Braves training camp at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in the spring of 1947, determined to make the grade. At first he performed so well and advanced so rapidly that Manager Southworth was on the point of installing him as the team's regular short-stop. Before the season opened, however, the Braves' shrewd little manager changed his mind. What Dark needed more than a year on the Boston bench was a full season or two in a fast minor league where he could play every day. Ball players improve only through action, not observation. Much as he realized it would disappoint the rookie, Southworth knew his decision was in the best interests of both Dark and the Braves.

Before sending him down, Southworth called Dark to his hotel room and explained his reasons for the move. "You're not quite ready," he told Alvin. "But keep fighting and you'll be back—very soon."

From the start the hustling, hard-working rookie was popular with his new teammates at Milwaukee. Intensely serious about his baseball career, one of the first things Dark did after reporting to the Brewers was to purchase a book of American Association fielding and batting averages in order to acquaint himself better with the men with whom and against whom he was playing.

In the line-up every day, he had a fine year with the pennant-winning Brewers. He took part in 149 games and batted a respectable .303. He led the American Association in runs with 121 and in doubles with forty-nine. He was voted the American Association "rookie of the year." The following spring he was back with the Braves, this time to stay.

At the start of spring training, however, it looked as though Dark would never make it. Although his hitting was of major-league caliber, his fielding left much to be desired. He booted easy chances, threw wildly on too many occasions. He was awkward on double-play balls. Among the first to give up on him were the newspapermen touring the Grapefruit League. A great prospect, they agreed, but he needs at least another year in the minors.

Alvin refused to give up. Knowing his major weakness lay along lines of defensive play, he concentrated

on improving his ability there. He worked hard and long with Manager Southworth and with coaches Freddy Fitzsimmons and John Cooney. Of great benefit to him in his struggle to make good was a natural ability to take and profit from instruction.

Pitcher Johnny Sain summed up Dark's training-camp experiences in this manner. "If you took ten players at random and told them all how to do something new, perhaps two or three would understand well enough to do it. Alvin Dark would be one of those two or three."

But along with the effort Dark was putting into the task at hand of making himself into a major-league shortstop, what benefited him most was a trade the Braves engineered with the Brooklyn Dodgers. On March 6 the Boston team purchased infielder Eddie Stanky.

Southworth wisely placed Dark and Stanky together as roommates. Almost immediately there was a notable improvement in Dark's infield play. The experienced Stanky taught him how to play percentages, how to save steps by playing the different batters where they were most likely to hit the ball. In this way Dark learned to get in front of balls that would otherwise have gone through the infield for base hits. He taught Dark to go down for ground balls, how to make the pivot on double plays in time to get clear of the rolling blocks thrown by incoming base runners.

Important, too, was the confidence in Dark displayed that spring by Southworth and Stanky. From

the first the manager acted as though there were no question of Dark's being his regular shortstop once the season opened. As for Stanky, his advice was always couched in a positive manner. For example, he began all instruction to Dark with the phrase "when you hit," or "when you make this play," rather than with the negative implication "if you hit," or "if you do so and so."

Dark responded to the coaching by working harder than ever. Although still erratic, his fielding began to show improvement. Helping him in his battle was an ability to profit by past errors. During a game with St. Louis in July, 1948, Dark made a mistake which cost the Braves an important victory. With one out and runners on first and third, Al fielded a ground ball close to second. Instead of stepping on the bag for the force-out and then completing the double play by throwing to first, Dark hesitated until second baseman Connie Ryan came over to the bag. His throw to Ryan, arriving with the sliding St. Louis runner, caused Ryan to throw hurriedly and wildly to first as the winning run from third crossed the plate.

After the game Dark was privately scolded by Manager Southworth. Alvin never repeated the mistake.

Yet with all his natural ability and his quickness to learn through instruction and past errors, Dark has an innate shrewdness and intelligence. His attitude on hitting serves as an example.

A line-drive hitter rather than a player who can reach and clear the outfield fences, Dark gets his extra

base hits on speed. Realizing his limitations, he delivered himself thus in spring training camp.

"I'm not a home-run hitter and never will be. If I swing for the long ball, I'm hurting myself and the team. So I'll hit with the pitch. I'll pull a little on inside balls and hit outside pitches to the right. I'll bunt a little, too."

During the 1948 season, Dark did all this and a bit more. After an injury removed shortstop Sibbi Sisti from the line-up, Alvin got his second chance at the job. So well did he handle himself that Sisti never again got him out.

During the season Manager Southworth compared him favorably with Marty Marion, the great shortstop of the St. Louis Cardinals. "Marty is the greatest defensive shortstop I have ever seen, but Dark is having a better all-around year than Marty did back in 1940, his first year with the Cardinals. Al is a better hitter and is improving to a surprising degree in the field."

Dark did improve to the point where, at the end of the 1948 season, he was named "rookie of the year" by a poll of the Most Valuable Player Committees of the Baseball Writers' Association of America. In the total vote (National and American Leagues), Dark had twenty-seven ballots to eight for runner-up Gene Bearden of the Cleveland Indians. His National League margin was twenty-one to three over Richie Ashburn of the Philadelphia Phillies.

At the conclusion of his first full major-league year, rookie Dark found himself in the middle of every ball

player's dream—participation as a regular in the World Series. Alvin played in all six games of the 1948 series and, while his hitting and fielding were not outstanding, he did a creditable job for a rookie. At the plate he collected four hits in twenty-four at-bats for a .167 average. In the field he was responsible for seven put-outs, twelve assists and three errors for an .864 average. His only extra base hit, a double, was hit off Cleveland southpaw Gene Bearden in the third game. It was one of five hits given up by the Cleveland rookie as he shut out the Braves, 2-0. Bearden allowed but six hits in the 10  $\frac{2}{3}$  innings he worked during the series.

Dark's batting average for the 1948 regular season was a solid .322. Playing in 137 games, he had 175 hits. Thirty-nine of these were doubles, six were triples and three were home runs. He drove in forty-eight runs and stole four bases.

One of Dark's greatest assets is his ability as a base-runner. Possessed of great natural speed, Dark's daring on the bases frequently was an important factor in Boston victories. An example may be seen from a night game with the Brooklyn Dodgers, May 13, 1949.

Dark was on first base and roommate Eddie Stanky on third when batter Earl Torgeson lifted a fly to left field. Instead of going halfway down to second until the ball was caught, Dark tagged up at first and daringly broke for second the instant the catch was made. With the necessary diversion thus furnished by Dark, Stanky broke for the plate and scored. The Braves won the game in ten innings, 6-5.

Dark's reasoning on the play was that he knew Brooklyn shortstop Pee Wee Reese would have to go into the outfield to handle the relay. That meant that a direct throw-in would have to come as far as third baseman Jorgensen. With Jorgensen forced to make the cut-off with his back to Stanky, Dark figured Stanky would have the necessary split-second jump on the ball to score.

After the game Dark disclaimed any credit for engineering the daring play. "Give Eddie the credit," he insisted to newsmen. "I don't know of any other player in the league who, on third, would bother to tag up on so short a fly."

Although Dark placed his football career behind him when he signed with the Braves in 1946, the following (now amusing) incident took place in early fall of 1947. General Manager John Quinn was quietly handling routine Braves business at his desk when the following telegram from Dark was placed before him:

Eligibility rules of this conference allow students to compete in sport other than one he is professional in. Do you mind if I play football?

After ridding his mind of pictures of his high-priced rookie shortstop being carried injured off a football field, Quinn, considerably shaken, got off the following prompt message:

Do not play football.

John Quinn



Back came Dark's telegram in reply:

How about me doing just the punting?

This time Quinn telephoned Dark at Southwestern Louisiana Institute and informed him that under no conditions was he to indulge in anything more strenuous or risky than golf. This time, Alvin obeyed.

In 1949, Dark's second year in the majors, Billy Southworth predicted to newsmen in Florida:

"A conscientious, smart boy like Dark will be even better this year than he was last. He hasn't spent the winter taking bows. He hasn't put on a single extra pound during the off season. He's already thinking about making a change in his batting style. He knows the pitchers have been thinking about him and are going to pitch him outside this year."

That's Alvin Dark—always hustling, his mind ever on his work—the boy who once was sentenced to a lifetime of invalidism has realized the baseball stardom he worked so hard to attain.

### ALVIN RALPH DARK

Born, Comanche, Oklahoma, January 7, 1923.

Bats right. Throws right. Height, 5' 11½". Weight, 184 pounds.

Year	Club	League	Pos.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
1946	Boston	N.L.	ss	15	13	0	3	3	0	0	1	0	.231	6	14	2	.909
1947	Milwaukee	A.A.	ss	149	614	121	186	49	7	10	66	14	.303	290	454	46	.942
1948	Boston	N.L.	ss	137	543	85	175	39	6	3	48	4	.322	253	393	25	.963

#### COMPLETE MAJOR LEAGUE TOTALS

2 years 152 556 85 178 42 6 3 49 4 .320 259 407 27 .961

#### WORLD SERIES RECORD

1948 Boston N.L. ss 6 24 2 4 1 0 0 0 0 .167 7 12 3 .864

ROBERT IRVING (BOB) ELLIOTT

*“ ‘Mr. Team’ of the Boston Braves ”*





ROBERT IRVING (BOB) ELLIOTT



## CHAPTER VI

ROBERT IRVING (BOB) ELLIOTT  
“‘MR. TEAM’ OF THE BOSTON BRAVES”

ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1946 the Pittsburgh Pirates traded infielder-outfielder Bob Elliott and reserve catcher Hank Camelli to the Boston Braves for Billy Herman and three so-so ball players—Whitey Wietelman, Stan Wentzel and Elmer Singleton. When Herman, who was to be Pittsburgh’s manager in 1947, heard of the trade the first question he asked was, “Who did they give for me?”

“Bob Elliott and Hank Camelli,” he was told.

“Elliott!” exclaimed the new manager. “They’ve traded the whole team on me!”

The player he was talking about was the same Elliott who, discouraged after almost four seasons of Class B baseball, threatened to quit the national pastime during the 1939 season.

Bob Elliott is one of the many California-born players who have attained stardom in the major leagues. Soon after Bob’s birth in San Francisco on November 26, 1916, the Elliott family moved to El Centro, California where young Bob grew up, received his schooling and made his first contact with softball and then baseball.

The youngest of four children, Bob was given an early start in athletics by his older brother Jack and by his father, both of whom had enjoyed some success as semi-pro baseball players. Completing the immediate family were Mrs. Elliott and older sisters Gwenn and Edith.

Bob's early schooling was at El Centro's Harding Grammar School. Starting in the fourth grade there, he moved up through the sixth when he transferred to Wilson Junior High. There he received his seventh- and eighth-grade schooling. Bob's father was employed for many years as a superintendent in a plaster plant in nearby Plaster City. Evenings and holidays little Bob spent many hours fooling around with a baseball with his father.

It was at El Centro's Central Union High School that Bob got his real start in organized athletics. Playing third base and shortstop, and with an occasional pitching job thrown in, Bob was a four-year letterman in baseball. As a sophomore end he earned a football letter. His last two years he was shifted to right half where he did the major share of the team's blocking. In track he ran the low hurdles, the relay, and competed in the broad jump and in the football throw. The latter, a replacement for the javelin event, was placed on the meet programs of the smaller schools in California's Imperial Valley after a youthful track competitor ran a javelin through his own head, killing himself. Elliott won three letters in track.

Bob grew fast and by the time he reached junior

year in high school he stood an inch over six feet and weighed a solid 171 pounds.

After graduating from Central Union Bob attended El Centro Junior College for one year. There being no college baseball team then, he confined his athletic participation to football. Unlike Vern Stephens, Jim Hegan and other graduates of American Legion baseball, Elliott was denied the advantages of legion competition. The small size of the scattered communities around El Centro precluded anything approaching the ambitious and well-organized programs characteristic of American Legion baseball. Yet for young Elliott there was an adequate substitute.

In those days winter baseball thrived in the Imperial Valley. Jack Stark, a former Pacific Coast League player, was sergeant on the El Centro police force. Winters he used to coax former coast-league buddies and occasional major-leaguers into playing a few months of baseball for the hometown semi-pro team. Major Leaguers Rip Russell and Buster Adams played with the El Centro nine as well as Pacific Coast players like Mike Hunt of Seattle. In 1934 Stark thought enough of Elliott's play to put him in the line-up, largely composed of tested professional players.

It was fast company for a youngster, even a youngster as talented as Bob Elliott. He learned a lot in those days, both from Stark and from his teammates. The El Centro team was a good one, so good that it was hired intact to represent Yuma, Arizona in the Arizona State tournament at Phoenix. El Centro won



the tournament; however, lack of funds kept the team from going to the national semi-pro tournament at Wichita, Kansas.

When Bob was in his eighteenth year, Stark gave him a letter of introduction to Willie Ludolph, a pitcher with the Oakland club of the Pacific Coast League. A tryout for the youngster was arranged for the Oaks' next visit to Los Angeles. Finally the big day arrived and Bob packed his glove and uniform and headed for the City of Angels. While en route to Wrigley Field, the Los Angeles ballpark, the bag containing Bob's glove and equipment was stolen. It was late afternoon and with evening and the hour for Bob's tryout approaching, he didn't have much time to replace the loss.

Frantically he scouted hardware stores and sporting-goods shops in the vicinity, piecing together a makeshift uniform. Somewhere he picked up a three-dollar glove. In another store he purchased a pair of ill-fitting size-ten shoes. At a hardware store he bought a motorman's cap, the nearest thing to a baseball cap he could find. Thus equipped he made his way to Wrigley Field and reported to Oakland manager Oscar Vitt.

Vitt looked over the nervous youngster, noting the ill-fitting uniform, the brand-new and woefully inadequate glove, the painfully shiny shoes. Too, he noted the anxious determination written into Elliott's face. Oscar decided to give the boy a break.

"Have you ever played night baseball?" he asked Elliott. "I mean, under lights like these," indicating

the blazing clusters overhead that transformed the Los Angeles night into day. Bob shook his head.

"Well, just work out tonight," Vitt told him. "I'll look you over before the game Saturday afternoon."

Gratefully, Bob did as he was bidden. He shagged flies, fielded grounders and ran a little. At least his try-out would be held under the daylight conditions to which he was accustomed.

Bright and early Saturday afternoon an eager Elliott reported for his big chance. Under the watchful eyes of Oscar Vitt he stepped to the plate and proceeded to line baseballs to all corners of the playing field. Two drives were hit over the fence and a third disappeared high in the light tower in left centerfield.

After the workout Bob returned to his home to await word from the Oakland baseball club. It wasn't long in coming. Within a week he received a contract from Oakland. Before signing the proffered professional document, Bob discussed the proposition carefully with his father. Having also been offered a scholarship at the University of Southern California, Bob was undecided which step to take.

During this period of indecision a Pittsburgh Pirate representative, George Cutshaw, appeared at the Elliott home. The choice of a college career or a minor-league baseball contract may have been difficult. However, there was no indecision once a chance to sign with a major-league team presented itself. After due consideration, the Elliotts, father and son, decided that Bob's best interests lay with the Pirates.

Bob reported to Savannah of the South-Atlantic League in 1936. Playing the outfield, he appeared in 144 games. drove in eighty-four runs and compiled a .292 batting average. Twelve of his hits were home runs, five were triples and nineteen were doubles. With Savannah the following year, he compiled almost identical records. He hit .292, drove in eighty-eight runs, had twenty-one doubles, sixteen triples and nine home runs.

Bob's manager at Savannah, and a man who taught him and helped him a great deal, was Chick Autrey, a former American League catcher. Later a Class A League, in those days the Class B circuit was almost too fast for a youngster of Elliott's years. Enos Slaughter<sup>1</sup> of the St. Louis Cardinals and Ray Sanders were but two later National Leaguers who served their apprenticeship with Elliott in the South-Atlantic League.

Several years before Bob reported to Savannah, the league had gotten into financial difficulty. Given a fresh start in 1936, players on the various team rosters were definitely on trial and battling for positions every day of the season. Of approximately one hundred and ten who at one time or another managed to get on the Savannah roster, but three remained at the close of the first season. Elliott, one of the three, went through the entire year without getting more than barely acquainted with the different roommates he had. It seemed there was a different one every three or four days.

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Tenth Series.

Despite the fact that in those days it was pretty much a pitchers' league, Bob had two good years at Savannah. Usually the pitching in the lower minor leagues consists of fastballs and curves. In his early days, Elliott had to learn to hit everything—fork balls and change-ups, as well as the expected curves and fastballs.

An eventful day in Bob's second season with Savannah occurred when his mother and father drove across the continent to see their son play. Bob capped the day's celebration by hitting a home run with the bases loaded.

He spent most of the 1938 season—132 games, to be exact, with Savannah, hitting .325. He put in eleven games with Knoxville of the Southern League. There his unhappiness was well reflected in a .233 average.

Bob almost quit baseball the following year. Disgusted and discouraged when the Pittsburgh organization wanted to send him to Knoxville again, Elliott carried his complaint direct to Pirate President William Benswanger. After four years in the lower strata of the minor leagues, Elliott felt that he deserved a chance to see whether he could make the grade in Class A baseball. His record was such that he felt he merited the promotion and the chance to make good in faster company. If he found he couldn't, he might as well give up baseball as spend his lifetime knocking around the Class B and C circuits. As an afterthought he told Benswanger he wanted more money.

The monetary angle was straightened out to every-

one's satisfaction and Benswanger told Bob he'd see what he could do about arranging Elliott's requested transfer to the Pacific Coast League. Bob had two reasons for requesting the shift. In the first place, playing with a Pacific Coast League team would allow him to remain closer to his home in El Centro. More important was the fact that the coast loop was but one step removed from the major leagues.

Before long Benswanger contacted Elliott with the good news that a deal for his transfer to the San Diego club of the Pacific Coast League was all but completed. At the moment the Pittsburgh Pirates were concluding the purchase of pitcher Tiny Chaplin from San Diego. The minute the deal was closed, Elliott was to be sent to San Diego.

That was as close as Bob ever got to playing in the Pacific Coast League. The night the two-way deal was to be completed, Chaplin's car was involved in an automobile accident and the little pitcher killed. Thus the Pirates were forced to ship Elliott to Louisville.

Although Louisville was in the then Double A American Association, it had the distinct drawback (for Bob) of being a Boston Red Sox farm. As such, it was only natural that those who played regularly were players owned by the parent Red Sox. The Pittsburgh-owned Elliott felt he had little chance of breaking into the line-up. He was not one to be satisfied with a season of pinch hitting and almost complete inactivity in the dugout.

Bob stuck it out for fourteen games. Then he called Benswanger and requested a transfer to a team where he could be assured of playing regularly. Once again Benswanger contacted the various teams in the Pacific Coast League seeking to place his rebellious farmhand. None of the coast clubs wanted the husky young outfielder. The best he could do, Benswanger told Bob, was to send him to Toronto of the International League. The Maple Leafs had become interested in Elliott through the recommendation of pitcher "Pretzels" Pezzullo, who had been a teammate of Bob's at Savannah.

Elliott had a good year with Toronto, hitting .328 in 115 games and driving in fifty-one runs. Rewarded by being called up to the Pirates, Elliott repeated his success against National League pitching. In thirty-two games with the Pirates, he batted .333, driving in nineteen runs. He never went back to the minors.

Bob was still an outfielder when he reported to the Pirates for the 1940 season. He played in 148 games and batted .292, just a shade under the magic .300 figure. He had sixty-four runs batted in and scored eighty-eight. The following year he batted .273 in 141 games. This time he upped his runs-batted-in total to seventy-six.

In 1941 the Elliotts moved to San Diego, where they bought a home. Bob and his wife, the former Iva Reah Skipper, had grown up together in El Centro and had shared their junior-high and high-school years. They were married March 12, 1938 and Judy, their first

child, was born Sept. 21, 1939. Cheryl was born August 20, 1944.

The year 1941 saw Bob named to the National League All Star team for the first time. He repeated in 1942, '44 and '48, the latter years as a third baseman. He is one of a handful of players to be named to the All Star team at more than one position.

An interesting story surrounds Elliott's switch from the outfield to the infield. Once again an automobile accident involving others was responsible for the change. Jeep Handley, the regular Pirate third baseman, had been injured in a car crash as the team prepared for the 1947 season and the Pirates were desperate for a steady replacement. Bored with the relative inactivity of outfield practice, Elliott had gotten in the habit of fooling around at third base when through in the outfield and it was there that owner Benswanger first took notice of him as a potential infielder. He suggested to Manager Frankie Frisch that he give Elliott a thorough trial at third and although a bit reluctant, Frisch agreed to the experiment.

First, however, Frisch went to Elliott and had a long talk with him. Bob agreed to give third base a whirl. Frisch's concluding words to Elliott supplied what little encouragement the hard-working outfielder needed.

"You're going to play third base from now on," Frisch told him. "At first you'll make errors—plenty of them, but don't let it get you down. You're our third baseman, regardless of how many errors you make.

Third base is a breeze. It'll add eighteen years to your career."

Given this kind of sendoff by his manager, Bob went out on the infield prepared to do or die. He almost died. A few days after taking over Handley's position, a wicked grounder caromed off Elliott's chest. Scrambling to his feet, Bob gasped to Frisch, "There go ten of those eighteen years you told me about."

A team player from first to last, Elliott stuck with the frequently discouraging job of learning to play a new position. With his natural ability and great love for the game, however, it wasn't long before he was an adequate third baseman and then a standout at the position. He picked up valuable pointers from Manager Frisch. He watched the other third sackers in the league, picking up additional help from seeing the way they handled themselves in the field.

One of the popular fables of baseball is that playing in the outfield adds ten to fifteen points to a player's batting average. Elliott found just the reverse to be true. His first year as an infielder he hit .297, compared with .273 the year before. After alternating between third base and the outfield in 1942, Bob spent the entire 1943 season as an infielder. He played second and short as well as third base and in 156 games batted .315. For the first time in his career he topped the 100 mark in runs batted in. He did it by one. Playing third base and shortstop in 1944, he slipped to .298. However, he upped his runs-batted-in total to



108. Alternating between the outfield and third base in 1945, he again drove in 108 runs. His batting average was .290. In 1946 he fell off slightly to .263.

Elliott didn't know it but important changes were in store for him. In 1946 the major-league winter meetings were held in Los Angeles. One of the pieces of business transacted was the trade which sent Elliott to the Braves in exchange for Pirate Manager-to-be Billy Herman. As soon as the trade was completed, Braves Manager Billy Southworth sent for his new player. During a heart-to-heart talk which took place between the two at the Biltmore Hotel, Southworth told Elliott of an experience from his own early baseball career.

"One day shortly after I broke into the big leagues with Cleveland, I hit an easy groundball to shortstop. I figured I was an easy out, so I loafed on the way to first. The shortstop bobbled the ball, though, and I started running for all I was worth. His throw just nipped me at first.

"Immediately I hopped all over the first-base umpire, Brick Owens, who had called the play.

"Owens came right back at me. 'I ought to fine you fifty dollars for trying to make a goat out of me and your manager ought to fine you the same for trying to cover yourself up.' "

He told Elliott a lot more, the sum total of which was to keep hustling at all times and leave the crabbing to someone else.

Then the Boston Manager turned to his new player. "You're a great ballplayer when you put your mind to it, Bob. When you do your best there's nobody better. I tell you now that if you hustle all the time next season, there's no reason why you shouldn't be the most valuable player in the league."

Bob went home and thought about his new manager's words. The next season he played as he had never played before. The promise Southworth had made him in a Los Angeles hotel room came true. In 1947 Elliott was voted the National League's most valuable player. He received a total of 205 votes out of a possible 336. He took the award by a margin of thirty points over Cincinnati's no-hit, no-run pitcher, Ewell Blackwell. Elliott received nine first-place votes, two for second place, two for third, and two fourth-place votes. He had three votes for fifth place, two for sixth, and also received one for eighth place.

Bob's batting average that year was .317, far below Harry Walker's National League-leading figure of .363. His 113 runs batted in was far exceeded by Johnny Mize's 138 and his total of twenty-two home runs less than half the fifty-one hit by Mize and Ralph Kiner of Pittsburgh. Yet, in the opinion of baseball experts, Elliott's team contribution outweighed the brilliance of his rivals' individual achievements.

In winning the award, Elliott became the first third baseman in National League history to be so honored. He was also the first Braves player in modern times to

win the award, the first since Johnny Evers won the Chalmers Award in 1914. Yet months before the baseball writers singled out Elliott for the honor, his own teammates had personally nominated him.

Outfielder Mike McCormick was the first to give him the name "Mr. Team." One day at the batting cage he addressed Elliott as "Mr. Team" and it wasn't long before the other Braves players picked it up. Then the Boston newspapers began calling him "Mr. Team."

Elliott was exactly that to his club. He was the "big" man, the one who came through in the pinches. He reminded Umpire Bill Klem of Rogers Hornsby. Klem called him the best right-handed hitter in the league. He was the despair of rival pitchers. Boston teammate Johnny Sain remembered Elliott as the first, "although by no means the last," player to hit what he considered his best curve out of the park. It happened at Braves Field in 1946 when Bob was still with Pittsburgh. Another time that year an Elliott single with the bases loaded drove in three runs off Sain.

What Elliott considers his greatest baseball thrill occurred the year when, in a game with Pittsburgh and with the Pirates two runs ahead, he hit a home run with two on to win the game for the Braves.

Elliott always possessed the valuable and rare ability of being able to deliver under pressure. An anonymous scouting report on him during the 1939 season which he spent with Toronto reads in part:

Bob Elliott—of. bats right; throws right.

One of the best right-hand hitters in the league; better than average fielder; fast enough and better than average arm.

We had plenty of trouble pitching to him.

During the 1948 season National League pitchers had their troubles pitching to Elliott. As the Braves won the pennant, Bob drove in 100 runs, the fifth time in his major-league career he had reached or passed the century mark. He hit twenty-three home runs and had a batting average of .283. As in the past, his big bat was an important factor in the Braves' string of successes.

Bob's career-long ability to come through in the clutch was never more clearly demonstrated than in the 1948 World Series with the Cleveland Indians. Remember that Elliott's batting average for the season had been .283. His complete major-league average (1939-1948) was a strong .294. In the six-game series against the best team in the American League, hitting against what many considered to be the finest pitching staff in the major leagues, Elliott upped his season mark to a sparkling .333, second only to teammate Earl Torgeson's mark of .389. Bob's five runs-batted-in topped the Braves and equalled the figure reached by Jim Hegan, Cleveland's leader in the RBI department.

In the first game of the series, Elliott collected no

hits in three appearances against Bob Feller. The Braves won that game, 1-0. The following day Bob had one hit in four appearances against Bob Lemon, driving in the only Boston run as the Braves bowed to the tune of four to one.

The series shifted to Cleveland where, in the third game, Gene Bearden shut out the Braves, 2-0. Elliott had one hit in three at-bats. He was hitless in the fourth game, won by Cleveland, 2-1.

Up to now the Braves had missed the home-run power of Elliott's big bat. In the fifth game the missing punch suddenly appeared. Facing Feller for the second time in the series, Elliott more than made up for his earlier lapse by hitting two home runs off the Cleveland fireball ace. In the first inning before the 86,288 persons packing Municipal Stadium, he homered with teammates Al Dark and Tommy Holmes on base. He repeated in the third, this time with the bases empty. He drove in four runs as the Braves downed the Indians, 11-5 and forced the series to move back to Boston. There, in the last game, he had a perfect day at bat, getting three hits in as many times up. Cleveland won the game, 4-3, and the series as Bob Lemon and Gene Bearden outpitched Bill Voiselle and Warren Spahn.

Perhaps the best indication of Elliott's attitude toward baseball may be realized from his words on being informed of his selection as 1947's most valuable player in the National League.

“Team play comes first in my book. I’m not worrying about individual honors.”

And that is the way anyone familiar with the Braves would expect Boston’s “Mr. Team” to speak.

# 116 FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES

## ROBERT IRVING ELLIOTT

Born, San Francisco, Calif., Nov. 26, 1916.

Bats right. Throws right. Height, 6'. Weight, 185 pounds.

Year	Club	League	Pos.	G	AB	R	II	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
1936	Savannah	S.A.L.	of	144	566	80	165	19	5	12	84	4	.292	219	37	30	.895
1937	Savannah	S.A.L.	of	139	565	92	165	21	16	9	88	8	.292	310	39	10	.972
1938	Knoxville	S.A.L.	of	11	43	7	10	2	1	0	3	1	.233	17	2	0	1.000
1938	Savannah	S.A.L.	of	132	532	97	173	30	11	12	93	10	.325	247	21	19	.934
1939	Louisville	A.A.	of	14	53	5	14	0	2	0	4	0	.264	18	1	0	1.000
1939	Toronto	I.L.	of	115	427	59	140	27	8	7	51	2	.328	200	11	2	.991
1939	Pittsburgh	N.L.	of	32	129	18	43	10	3	3	19	0	.333	88	1	2	.978
1940	Pittsburgh	N.L.	of	148	551	88	161	34	11	5	64	13	.292	302	12	7	.978
1941	Pittsburgh	N.L.	of	141	527	74	144	24	11	3	76	6	.273	281	9	9	.970
1942	Pittsburgh	N.L.	3b-of	143	560	75	166	26	7	9	89	2	.296	176	286	36	.928
1943	Pittsburgh	N.L.	2b-3b-ss	156	581	82	183	30	12	7	101	4	.315	150	206	25	.947
1944	Pittsburgh	N.L.	3b-ss	143	538	85	160	28	16	10	108	9	.297	169	285	27	.944
1945	Pittsburgh	N.L.	3b-of	144	541	80	157	36	6	8	108	5	.290	219	185	23	.946
1946	Pittsburgh <sup>a</sup>	N.L.	3b-of	140	486	50	128	25	3	5	68	6	.263	232	90	7	.979
1947	Boston <sup>b</sup>	N.L.	3b	150	555	93	176	35	5	22	113	3	.317	129	302	20	.956
1948	Boston	N.L.	3b	151	540	99	153	24	5	23	100	6	.283	146	298	26	.945

### COMPLETE MAJOR LEAGUE TOTALS

10 years	1348	5008	744	1471	272	78	95	846	54	.294	1892	1764	182	.953
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### WORLD SERIES RECORD

1948	Boston	N.L.	3b	6	21	4	7	0	0	2	5	0	.333	11	14	3	.893
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<sup>a</sup> Traded to Boston with Hank Camelli for Billy Herman, Whitey Wietelman, Stanley Wentzel and Elmer Singleton, September 30.  
<sup>b</sup> Voted the Most Valuable Player in the National League for 1947.

### ALL STAR TOTALS

1941	N.L.	of	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	0	0	0	.000
1942	N.L.	3b	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.000	1	2	0	1.000
1944	N.L.	3b	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	0	3	0	1.000
1948	N.L.	3b	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.00	0	0	0	.000

Outstanding performances: led NL third basemen in fielding, 1947; led in po, 1942-'48; led in assists, 1942, '43 and '44; led in errors, 1942-4 and tied in '43; led in double plays, 1943 and tied in '44; led NL in bases on balls in 1948 with 131.

World Series records: Established record for most chances by third baseman, 6 game series (28). Est. rec. for most chances accepted cleanly by third baseman (25). Tied rec. of Benny Kauff, NY Giants, for home runs by NL player in one game (2); tied rec. for most home runs in consec. at-bats (2); tied rec. for perfect game at-bat, Oct. 11; tied rec. for most runs-batted-in, 2 consec. at-bats (4), Oct. 10; tied rec. most errors by third baseman in 6 game series (3); tied rec. for most po by third baseman (Oct. 11).

JAMES EDWARD (JIM) HEGAN

*"Cleveland's Iron Man in the Iron Mask"*







JAMES EDWARD (JIM) DEEGAN (left) with his battery mate, GENE BEARDEN



## CHAPTER VII

JAMES EDWARD (JIM) HEGAN

"CLEVELAND'S IRON MAN IN THE IRON MASK"

LYNN, MASSACHUSETTS, a city of close to 100,000 persons, has been celebrated chiefly in the past as one of the leading shoe-manufacturing centers of the United States. But during the years immediately preceding the 1948 World Series, it began to attract almost equal fame as the home and birthplace of Jim Hegan, catcher for the Cleveland Indians.

One of the oldest American cities—it was originally settled in 1629—Lynn has long pursued a program of public recreation planning and expansion that has been of inestimable value to its younger citizens. Parks and playgrounds dot the various sections of the city, for each of which there is a regulated and supervised program of sports. It is to his city's program of recreational training that Hegan attributes the lion's share of credit for his great success in major-league baseball.

Hegan was born August 3, 1920. His father was a policeman on the Lynn force and Jim was the second youngest of a brood that included, besides himself, five brothers and two sisters.

With so many older brothers around, it was almost

inevitable that young Jim turn to sports at an early age. His earliest recollections in the field of outdoor activities revolve around ballgames, hikes and swimming and fishing excursions with his brothers. Included, too, were wonderful, albeit all too infrequent trips to nearby Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox of the American League. And as little Jim watched the stars—Foxy<sup>1</sup> and Ruth,<sup>2</sup> Gehrig<sup>3</sup> and Grove,<sup>4</sup> and Cochrane<sup>5</sup>—who played there regularly, he decided that someday he, too, would be a major-league ballplayer.

Despite the fact that Mickey Cochrane of the Detroit Tigers was his early idol, it was some time before Jim decided to become a catcher. Actually, when the occasion arrived for the decision to be made, Jim's mind was made up for him by his schoolmates. Members of his sixth-grade class decided one day that they wanted their own ball team. However after heads were counted and positions checked, it was discovered that the fledgling nine had no catcher. Hegan was a logical and, as it turned out, most fortunate choice. He put on his first chest protector, mask and shin guards at the age of eleven and, with few exceptions, he's had them on ever since.

After elementary school Jim moved up to Breed Junior High where his athletic participation was

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Fourth Series.

<sup>2</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, First Series.

<sup>3</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Third Series.

<sup>4</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Eighth Series.

<sup>5</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Third Series.

directed into different channels. With no school baseball or football team, the growing Hegan turned toward basketball. Even then he was tall for his age so the cage sport was ideally suited to him. From it he learned the speed and agility of foot that were later to stand him in such good stead in the major leagues.

But Jim didn't go without his beloved baseball. Just because his school had no team didn't mean that he neglected baseball. Evenings, after school, he used to play in one of the city's park leagues.

In 1935 Jim broke into American Legion baseball. He started with Post #6 in West Lynn. Meanwhile he attended Lynn English High School where he was to become one of the finest all-around athletes in the school's history.

The summer of 1936 the Hegans moved from West Lynn to East Lynn and Jim's playing days with Post #6 ended. No sooner was the family settled at its new address than Jim joined up with American Legion Post #291. He played with its team for two years, '36 and '37. Meanwhile he was becoming a three-sport letterman at Lynn English. He won two varsity letters in football and three each in basketball and baseball. He captained the baseball team his junior year and the basketball team the following season. At first he alternated between catching and the outfield, where his great speed could be utilized to the best advantage. But by his senior year, Jim was solidly and wholeheartedly behind the plate.

With a player of Hegan's natural ability, the Lynn

English basketball team enjoyed marked success. In 1937 the team went to the finals of the state basketball tournament, losing out to Lowell High. Hegan was named to the all-tournament team. The following year the team went to the nationally famous schoolboy tournament at Glens Falls, New York and although quickly eliminated, Jim was picked as center on the all-tournament second team.

At Lynn English Jim was fortunate enough to have as his coach Tom Whelan, a former professional ball-player who had received his training under Donnie Bush. Whelan was quick to recognize the great talent latent in the youthful Hegan's growing body and although he disclaims any part in Jim's development, Hegan is ever ready to admit the great debt he owes to Whelan's fine instruction.

"I got my basic training from Tom," Jim has stated. "He saw that I got it correctly. When I began my professional career, I was just that much ahead of other ball players who had learned their fundamentals wrong and had to go back and begin all over again."

Under Whelan's tutelage Jim began to blossom. Scouts for the various major- and minor-league teams in the vicinity began to drift in for the games in which young Hegan played. Finally, when he thought Jim was ready, Whelan sent his protégé to Fenway Park for a tryout with the Cleveland Indians.

In those days Steve O'Neill was managing the Indians and when Dewey Metevier, the former Cleveland ball player, showed up and began to rave about a kid

named Hegan who was playing school and Legion ball in nearby Lynn, O'Neill told Metevier to bring Hegan around for a tryout.

One day in 1937 a tall, gangling youngster showed up and introduced himself to O'Neill as Jim Hegan. O'Neill looked him over briefly, noting the serious, pinched features, the long arms and legs, and above all the large, capable hands. Tossing him a baseball, O'Neill told Jim to get behind the plate and throw to the bases.

Young Hegan leaped to obey. This was something he could do and do well. He went into his crouch, straightened and whistled a perfect peg to second base. He repeated. He did it a third time and a fourth. The Red Sox players, who had been drifting off the field in the direction of their locker room, stood around open-mouthed at the exhibition Jim was putting on. After a while he switched and began throwing to first base and then to third. But no matter which the base, every throw was a thing of beauty—fast, accurate, right on a dime.

Jimmy Foxx, the famed slugger of the Red Sox, came onto the field during the exhibition and his eyes bulged in amazement.

"Holy smoke!" he yelled to the other players. "Who's the kid throwing?"

"Somebody from Lynn named Hegan," a teammate explained.

"How do you like that?" another Red Sox moaned. "Here's a prospect like that as close to Fenway Park



as Lynn and when he comes here, who does he work out with—the Cleveland Indians!”

That day there wasn't enough time for O'Neill to watch Hegan catch. Instead, he asked him to come back the next day. Hegan explained he couldn't. He was scheduled to play in a sandlot all star game at Braves Field. “All right,” O'Neill shrugged. “We'll watch you there.”

The Indians' manager sent Coach George Uhle over the following day and Uhle returned in a state of high excitement. Hegan had played in the outfield, he reported, and had also hit three long balls.

“I wish he was my kid, Steve,” he said. “He's worth thirty-five thousand.”

With such a glowing report at hand, O'Neill wired Cleveland General Manager Cy Slapnicka to get Hegan. But Slapnicka was more cautious than his manager. He sent a scout to look Hegan over and only after getting a third favorable report did he go to Lynn to talk to Hegan's parents. He offered them a sizable piece of money to get Jim to sign with the Indians. But by now the Hegans had listened to so many scouts that they were a bit wary and trade-wise. Finally Slapnicka got up and went to the window where his car, a Buick, was parked on the street outside.

“How would you like a car like that?” he asked. “It's yours if Jim signs with us.”

With Tom Whelan sitting in on negotiations, Jim signed and thus became the property of the Cleveland Indians. At Whelan's insistence, a clause was inserted

into the agreement that Hegan would report to his new owners immediately upon graduation from high school in 1938.

Before Jim graduated, however, he was to hang up other scholastic records. His school baseball team was state champion the year of his captaincy. A home run he made against arch-rival Lynn Classical was so well hit it rolled up a hill almost a quarter of a mile away from Lynn Memorial Park and was, in fact, rolling back toward the pursuing outfielder as Hegan circled the bases.

In 1937 Hegan and his American Legion teammates brought fame to their city by winning the Legion championship in three straight games over New Orleans. A drive Jim hit out of Heinemann Park was instrumental in the Lynn Post's victory.

When he returned to school for the fall semester, Jim was in no mood to play football. With a successful major-league tryout and an American Legion championship behind him, he thought he'd rather relax and have some free time instead of throwing himself immediately into a major high-school football season.

He stuck it out for only a few weeks. Then after watching the first couple of Lynn English games from the sidelines, he reported for practice and, in his first game against Salem, caught a touchdown pass to register one of the scores in Lynn's 14-0 win. The catch was a marvel. At the last second, leaping in front of a defensive halfback who was set to make the interception, Jim came down on the two-yard line with his

back to the opposing player. In the manner of a basketball player throwing up a hook shot from the key-hole, Jim first faked the defensive man to one side and then, after he had committed himself, Jim moved easily the other way and stepped over the goal line unmolested.

Tom Whelan, now principal at Lynn English, considers Jim one of the finest boys he has ever coached. "He was never a disciplinary problem," Whelan insists. "He was respectful to both his supervisors and his teammates, always a gentleman, and his character was absolutely beyond reproach.

"In practice he was always the first to reach the field in whatever sport he was taking part. And he was invariably the last to leave. More important, he was always on time."

Courteous, quiet, easy going, Jim nevertheless refused to submit himself to unnecessary abuse. In one particular basketball game, the slower opponent assigned to guard Jim tried to keep up with him by the exasperating tactic of hanging onto Hegan's belt every time he tried to move up the court. Jim stood the outrage as long as he could. Then, without a word, he floored the offender. He was not troubled further.

Jim started his professional baseball career in 1938. Playing with Springfield in the Middle Atlantic League, he took part in sixty-two games, dividing his time between the outfield and his favorite catching position. Oddly, Jim's fellow catcher on the Spring-

field roster was Phil Masi, later the star backstop of the Boston Braves and Pittsburgh Pirates.

"The Springfield roster was kind of small," Jim likes to reminisce. "The way we worked it, Phil and I split our assignments. The one who didn't catch had to play the outfield."

The arrangement lasted only one year. In 1939 Masi went up to the Braves. Hegan, however, was back with Springfield. In 1938 he had hit .292, driven in nineteen runs, and hit five home runs. The next year his average slipped to .243. This time, his total of runs brought in rose to fifty-three and his home-run production to thirteen.

In 1940 he earned a promotion from the Class C club to Wilkes Barre of the Class A Eastern League. If for nothing else, the year was remarkable for being the first in which Jim spent all of his active days behind the plate. The period of alternating behind the mound and receiving was over. From now on, Jim Hegan was a catcher.

After thirty-two games with Wilkes Barre, Jim was moved up to faster company. He went to Oklahoma City, a Double A team, where he came under the direction of Manager Rogers Hornsby. Under Hornsby, he boosted his Wilkes Barre average from .244 to a respectable .283. Jim developed rapidly. In 1941, after dividing his time between Oklahoma City and Wilkes Barre again, he came up with the Indians. In his major-league debut in Philadelphia, he achieved

the double distinction of catching the Indians' great pitcher, Bob Feller, and of hitting a home run.

Afterwards, Hegan admitted that he hadn't been too nervous. "Of course, playing in the big leagues for the first time was a wonderful thrill, but I wasn't nervous. I guess the reason was because I didn't expect to stick with the Indians."

Jim did stick. He played sixteen games with the Cleveland club, compiling a .319 average, the first time in his career he got over the charmed .300 mark in hitting.

After the season closed, Jim returned to his home in Lynn where, after a short time, he and Clare Helen Kennedy, a former schoolmate at Lynn English, were married. Two years ahead of Clare, Jim had never dated her during their school days. The previous year he had seen her working, during the Christmas season, in a Lynn department store. There was to be a reunion dance at the high school and all Jim's friends had dates. At the store one day, Jim asked Clare if he could see her after working hours. She agreed, and before leaving her that night Jim invited her to go to the dance with him. They were married on Nov. 9, 1941. Their only child, Mike, was born the following year.

An oddity of Jim's minor-league career is that during those five years on three different teams, he had only two managers. At Springfield in '38 and '39 and later at Wilkes Barre in '40 and '41 it was Earl Wolgamot, a former catcher. At Oklahoma City, as has

been stated before, Rogers Hornsby was his manager.

The new bridegroom had a rather inauspicious year in 1942. Playing with the Indians, he took part in sixty-eight games and batted an anaemic .194. The following year he enlisted in the Coast Guard. He spent the first year managing a service team in Boston, but after that baseball was out. The next sixteen months he served on troop-transport duty in the Pacific.

Back in baseball in 1946, Jim reported to spring training camp with the Indians at Clearwater, Florida. There, possibly from overeagerness to get back into playing condition, he drove himself to the extent that he injured his throwing arm. One morning a worried Hegan reported to trainer Max Weisman. Jim said he had been unable to raise his arm far enough to comb his hair. X-rays were immediately taken. When they showed nothing, Hegan was put on a strict training program of running and nothing else. He wasn't even permitted to touch, let alone throw a baseball. After a while, the soreness disappeared from his arm and Jim went back to catching.

In the meantime, however, Frank Hayes had nailed down the job as number-one backstop. But Jim managed to get into eighty-eight games and compile a .236 batting average.

The following year the Cleveland front office decided to do what it could in the way of special instruction to improve Hegan's batting average. Rogers Hornsby, his former manager at Oklahoma City, was

brought to the Cleveland training camp at Tucson and Jim was turned over to the veteran for close batting supervision.

"Hornsby got me to follow through," Jim relates. "All the time he kept repeating, 'Meet the ball—meet the ball and hit straight away. Aim your hits through the box. In that way, if you're a little ahead of the pitch, you'll hit to left field. If you're swinging late, you'll hit to right.'"

That year Jim caught 135 of the Indians' 154 games. He caught the no-hitter Don Black threw at the Philadelphia A's on July 10 and later, in a night game in Boston, experienced what he considers his greatest major-league thrill. Jim's friends and neighbors in Lynn decided to honor him with a "Jim Hegan Night" the next time the Indians came to Fenway Park. Finally the occasion arrived and, before an admiring throng of his home town worshippers, Hegan was presented with numerous gifts that included a check and an automobile. Jim expressed his gratitude by hitting a home run and driving in all the runs in Cleveland's 3-2 victory.

He was picked for the American League All Star team but did not play as Buddy Rosar caught the entire game. Hegan's batting average for the season was a sturdy .249.

1948 was Cleveland's World Series year and Jim Hegan was a heavy contributor to the Indians' success. He caught 144 games, including the famous play-off with the Boston Red Sox. He hit fourteen home

runs, half of them with men on base and one with the bases loaded. He drove in sixty-one runs. He blossomed forth as a base stealer, pilfering six sacks and was hailed by Coach Bill McKechnie as "the best base stealer on the club." In the final three months of the season he hit close to .280, winding up the year with a .248 mark. He caught his second no-hit game. This time Bob Lemon was the pitcher, June 30 the date and Art Houtteman of Detroit the opposing pitcher. Score of the game was 2-0.

The year also saw a notable change in Hegan's disposition and temperament. Previously quiet and easy-going, Hegan began to take charge on the field. Although no "show-boat," he began to dispute balls and strikes with umpires when he felt his objection justified. Never turning fully around to face the umpire he was challenging, Hegan confined his comments to an over-the-shoulder variety that was not discernible to the man in the stands. By this tactic, he earned the further respect of the men in blue, for they appreciated the manner in which he kept his protests hidden from the spectators. He also earned some close calls on balls and strikes for Cleveland pitchers.

Behind this late flowering of Hegan's is one of the most touching stories connected with the national pastime. In 1947 occurred the famous incident which saw Hegan temporarily relieved by Manager Boudreau of his chore of calling pitches. The incident, a low in any catcher's career, is best forgotten but it sheds light on the rather so-so season Hegan had in 1947.



Beset by doubts and worries, he was hardly in the frame of mind to be able to concentrate fully on his playing.

Partial result of the incident was Jim's holdout in the spring of 1948. Although Jim denies that he wanted to be traded, hold out he did, finally coming to terms with owner Bill Veeck. Then, midway through the season of 1948, Hegan began to exhibit a new confidence. There was no Frank Hayes or Al Lopez to challenge him for his job as there has been the past two seasons. There was only Joe Tipton, a rookie. At one point, when both Hegan and Tipton were out of action temporarily, Manager Lou Boudreau had to go behind the bat briefly.

Hegan began to realize that he was head man. He began to take charge, and with a vengeance. On July 21 at Yankee Stadium he hit a home run with the bases loaded. Behind the big catcher's suddenly improved play was undoubtedly a desire to come through for his owner.

During the Indians' second eastern trip that season Jim's wife Clare suddenly became ill in Cleveland, where she was alone with little Mike. She was rushed to a hospital and while Jim was on his way home, owner Bill Veeck assumed charge. When Jim arrived he found his wife in the care of day and night nurses provided by Veeck. Flowers, sent by the Indians' president, helped to make the hospital room cheerful. Jim learned, too, that Veeck had spent the entire night at Mrs. Hegan's side, lending what comfort he could.

The baby the Hegans had been expecting arrived prematurely and was still-born.

Jim arrived to find his wife comfortable and receiving the best medical attention. His gratitude to his employer cannot be measured. To members of the Cleveland press Jim said: "I'll never forget what Bill did. You can tell anyone you please that I think Bill Veeck is the greatest man on earth."

Perhaps the best summation of Hegan's very considerable contribution to the Indians' drive to the pennant may be realized from the tremendous amount of work the Tribe got out of him. According to veteran Red Sox receiver Birdie Tebbetts, measure of a catcher's true worth is his ability to catch when hurt. In 1948, as previously stated, Hegan caught 144 of 155 games, and of those 144 there were doubtless days when he didn't feel up to par physically, when his fingers were numbed or bruised by catching, or when his legs ached and his head rang from glancing foul tips. He absorbed countless collisions at home plate with rival runners trying to score. Yet day after day he was in there calling the pitches for the Indians' assorted moundsmen.

He caught two young pitchers to twenty-game seasons. Gene Bearden, the left-handed rookie sensation, posted a 20 and 7 mark while Bob Lemon, a converted infielder, hung up a 20 and 14 record, including the previously mentioned no-hitter.

It is doubtful whether a more difficult staff of pitchers for a man to catch could be assembled than Cleve-

land had in 1948. For one, there was Bobby Feller, his fastball not quite as blazing as in days gone by, but still plenty good enough to keep the most agile catcher on edge. There was Bob Lemon with his assortment of knucklers, drops and curves. There was Gene Bearden with a knuckler and slider that drove hitters (and probably catchers) crazy. There was the ageless Satchel Paige with the weirdest assortment of trick stuff in the history of the game. Yet catch them Hegan did—and to Cleveland's first pennant since 1920.

But Hegan wasn't satisfied with the job, no matter how well done. True, the Indians had won the pennant, but there still remained the World Series with the Boston Braves. Jim caught every game of the six-game series. Not only that, he led his hard-hitting teammates in runs-batted-in with five. In the first game against Johnny Sain, he collected one of the four hits Sain allowed and stole a base on his former teammate Masi. Boston won the game, 1-0. He was hitless the second day as the Indians evened the Series 1-1 behind Bob Lemon's 4-1 win. He singled and drove in a run in the third game as Cleveland won 2-0.

In the fourth game, won by Cleveland, 2-1, he was hitless, although he was credited with a sacrifice. In the fifth game, won by the Braves, 11-5, he drove in three of the Indians' runs with a home run that came with teammates Ken Keltner and Walter Judnich on base. Back in Boston for the sixth and deciding game, he collected another hit and drove in another run as the Indians won the World's Championship, 4-3.

Popular, well liked by players and fans, Hegan was without question the finest defensive catcher in baseball at the conclusion of the 1948 season. "Mechanically he is perfect," Birdie Tebbetts of the Boston Red Sox declared. "All he needs is a little more hitting and that undoubtedly will come. He has a great temperament."

Although it isn't generally realized, Hegan is pretty young to have attained such a high position in the game. For some reason, catchers generally do not achieve stardom until after years of hard work in either or both the minors and majors. Occasionally a Bob Feller or a Hal Newhouser<sup>6</sup> will come along to shoulder his way into the front rank of pitching but with the catchers it takes a little longer.

Maybe it's because of the myriad things necessary to make a great catcher—the excellent throwing arm, the ability possessed by Jim Hegan to get under the high, twisting pop-ups that often can mean the difference between victory and defeat. Too, there is the ability to be a good target, the ability to call pitches correctly and with the latter the valuable asset of winning and holding the confidence of your pitchers.

An example from the play-off game of the 1948 season will illustrate how completely Jim overcame his bitter experience of the year before.

At one point in the play-off game with the Red Sox, Cleveland pitcher Gene Bearden was behind hitter Ted Williams, 3 and 0. Unhesitatingly Hegan signalled

<sup>6</sup>See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Tenth Series.

for a knuckleball. Just as unhesitatingly Bearden threw it. It was was a strike. Hegan called for another knuckler and then a third. On the last one Williams was an easy out.

Hegan admits he has no special pattern for calling signals. "If you have, the batter soon gets wise," he says. But pattern or not, in 1948 Jim's calling of pitches must have been to the liking of the Cleveland mound staff. Gene Bearden shook him off on only two occasions.

One of the reasons for Hegan's success is the fact that he keeps himself in condition the year round. He neither smokes nor drinks. The one time a jokester tried to spike Hegan's ginger ale with a little whiskey, Jim smelled the liquor as he raised his glass and immediately threw it aside.

Natural ability, too, is largely responsible for the long way he has come. However, Jim prefers to give the major share of credit to his home town of Lynn. "When I was a kid, I did nothing but play baseball in the summer, as many as three games a day—mornings, afternoons and evenings. The Lynn park and playground department did a lot for me when I was growing up. I'll never forget it."

# JAMES EDWARD HEGAN

Born, Lynn, Massachusetts, August 3, 1920.

Bats right. Throws right. Height, 6' 2". Weight, 190 pounds.

Year	Club	League	Pos.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
1938	Springfield	MAL	of-c	62	185	33	54	10	3	5	19	1	.292	256	33	6	.980
1939	Springfield	MAL	of-c	103	342	46	83	13	1	13	53	0	.243	616	57	15	.978
1940	Wilkes Barre	EL	c	32	78	7	19	3	3	0	7	0	.244	108	13	4	.968
1940	Oklahoma City	TL	c	44	138	16	39	7	3	2	18	3	.283	161	15	3	.983
1941	Oklahoma City	TL	c	77	256	30	62	9	7	1	26	3	.242	322	62	9	.977
1941	Wilkes Barre	EL	c	34	98	9	23	2	4	2	12	0	.235	116	22	4	.972
1941	Cleveland	AL	c	16	47	4	15	2	0	1	5	0	.319	63	10	2	.973
1942	Baltimore	IL	c	4	8	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	.250	10	0	0	1.000
1942	Cleveland	AL	c	68	170	10	33	5	0	0	11	1	.194	227	32	6	.977
1943, 1944, 1945 in military service																	
1946	Cleveland	AL	c	88	271	29	64	11	5	0	17	1	.236	386	47	5	.989
1947	Cleveland	AL	c	135	378	38	94	14	5	4	42	3	.249	566	54	7	.989
1948	Cleveland	AL	c	144	472	60	117	21	6	14	61	6	.248	637	76	7	.990

## COMPLETE MAJOR LEAGUE TOTALS

5 years	451	1338	141	323	53	16	19	136	11	.241	1879	219	27	.987
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## WORLD SERIES RECORD

1948	Cleveland	AL	c	6	19	2	4	0	0	1	5	1	.211	25	5	0	1.000
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Outstanding performances: Led American League catchers in putouts, 1947-8; led American League catchers in double plays in 1948 and tied in 1947. Led American League catchers in assists in 1948.



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THOMAS DAVID (TOMMY) HENRICH

*“The Yankees’ ‘Old Pro’ ”*

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THOMAS DAVID (TOMMY) HENRICH



## CHAPTER VIII

THOMAS DAVID (TOMMY) HENRICH  
"THE YANKEES' 'OLD PRO'"

**T**OMMY HENRICH is what is known as a ball player's ball player. Quiet, unassuming, unspectacular, his work is best appreciated by fellow players, teammates and serious students of the game. There isn't a manager in either league who wouldn't count himself lucky to have Tommy on his team.

Ask any player to pick the top active outfielders today and chances are nine out of ten he will list Henrich among his first choices. Ask members of the Baseball Writers' Association, the men who live with and report the daily activity along the nation's major-league baseball fronts, the same question and note how quickly the name Henrich is dropped into the conversation. We have observed him for years, both as an infielder and as an outfielder, and in our book he is without a peer both as a player and a gentleman.

Now in his tenth year in the American League, all of which he has spent with the New York Yankees, Henrich has now arrived at the point where his work is seen and appreciated by the fans. But it wasn't always so. Undoubtedly one of the reasons for this relative anonymity was the caliber of the men with whom Tommy

played. When he broke in with the Yankees in 1937, he joined a team which listed among its top stars men like the immortal Lou Gehrig, Joe Gordon, Joe DiMaggio,<sup>1</sup> Red Ruffing, Frank Crosetti, Red Rolfe and George "Twinkletoes" Selkirk.

Always there was a Bill Dickey,<sup>2</sup> a Charlie Keller or a Lefty Gomez to capture the imagination and attention of the Yankee Stadium fans. Meanwhile Tommy Henrich went along doing his usual workmanlike job in the outfield. Later, when managerial pressure dictated such a move, Henrich moved into the infield and carried on in the same fashion. Although preferring his outfield berth to the first-base position, Henrich accepted the shift without question. Now he's back in the outfield and happier about the whole thing.

Henrich is one of the few ball players who, so to speak, came up the easy way. Not that Tommy didn't work hard for his success. Far from it. The point is he is one of those fortunate few whose natural ability was so great that the necessary period of apprenticeship was reduced to an absolute minimum.

When Tommy came up to the Yankees in 1937, he had had exactly four years of minor-league experience. Yet he stuck with the World Series Champions, playing sixty-seven games his first year in the big time and hitting .320. During that year he had a brief spell of seven games with Newark where he hit .440, enough

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Fifth Series.

<sup>2</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Seventh Series.

to make good his promise to Manager Joe McCarthy, when sent to the Yankee farm, that he'd be back.

Speaking baseball-wise, Henrich was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. For example, in 1937, his first year in the majors, he earned in the neighborhood of \$30,000. Having spent the 1935 and '36 seasons with New Orleans and part of the '35 season with Zanesville (all Cleveland farm teams) Henrich balked at being sent to Milwaukee to which he had been sold with Ralph Weingartner for \$7,500. Tommy suspected the Cleveland club of deliberately covering him up lest he fall under the eyes of other major-league scouts. Accordingly, he appealed to Commissioner of Baseball Kennesaw M. Landis and after a series of hearings in New Orleans, Judge Landis ruled in favor of Henrich and declared him a free agent.

His decision, certainly one of the most important to the New York Yankees and, less happily, to the Cleveland Indians, read in part:

"Investigation of the status of this player (Henrich), initiated at his request, discloses that he has been 'covered up' for the benefit of the Cleveland club and that his transfer by New Orleans to Milwaukee was directed by the Cleveland club and prevented his advancement to a Major League club under the selection rules. Because of this violation of the player's rights under his contract and the Major-Minor League Rules, he is hereby declared a free agent. Signed, Kennesaw M. Landis, Commissioner."

With this emancipation proclamation in his pocket, Henrich went home to await the visits of major-league scouts his .336 and .333 batting averages at New Orleans were sure to bring out. He didn't have long to wait. One of the first men at his door was Johnny Nee, the New York Yankee's representative. He offered the twenty-one old Henrich a bonus of some \$20,000 for signing a Yankee contract. When he returned to New York, Henrich was Yankee property.

The \$20,000 bonus he received, plus his first year's salary (reportedly between \$5500 and \$6500) added to his World Series share of \$5,836 brought his earnings to a sum in excess of \$30,000—not bad for the ex-softball player from Ohio!

Thomas David Henrich, one of six children, was born at Massillon, Ohio, February 20, 1916. His father, a plastering contractor, had more than the average American's healthy interest in sports and from an early age Tommy and his brothers were interested in athletics. Even in those days the Massillon-Canton region was a hotbed of football. One of Tommy's ex-fellow townsmen is Paul Brown, the famous coach of the professional Cleveland Browns of the All-America Football Conference.

Naturally enough, young Tommy's first athletic interest was in football. But his parents said no. Whether his father saw a future major-leaguer in his young son or no, football was out as far as young Henrich was concerned.

Tommy's father had enjoyed a reputation as a hockey

player so the son turned to that game. Mostly, though, he played softball. After grade school in Massillon. Tommy attended St. John's Catholic High in nearby Canton. While still in high school, he began playing softball with a Massillon team that over one period won seventy-six out of eighty games. He and his brother Ed played with the team during 1931 and 1932. Tommy played in the outfield and pitched while his brother held down first base.

Following a town tournament which his team won, there was a misunderstanding about some money and the team disbanded. The year was 1933, an important one in the Henrich career, for it saw Tommy's entrance into baseball. He played briefly with the Prince Horn Dairy team where he was good enough to attract the attention of Billy Doyle, a Detroit Tiger scout. After Henrich had played five games, Doyle approached him about signing with the Tigers. However, Detroit didn't want him until the following year, 1934, and Tommy was impatient.

"I figured if I was good enough to draw the attention of a scout I might be good enough to play professional baseball."

The first thing Tommy did was quit the Prince Horn team for another club with better training and playing facilities. He joined the Acmes, who had their own field, practiced every evening, and played two and three games a week. In between times he clerked in a steel mill.

With the Acmes Tommy continued to attract the



attention of major-league scouts. In August of that year Bill Bradley of the Cleveland Indians came to town to look him over. Unfortunately the game Bradley saw lasted only three innings before a minor riot broke it up. Even so, he saw enough in the young Massillon player to be waiting for him when he got home that night. Bradley wanted Henrich to play with the Indians' Zanesville farm but Tommy balked. He continued to balk until November, when he went to Cleveland and signed the contract the Indians had offered him.

Despite the promise he showed, Henrich wasn't able to make the Zanesville Greys that year of 1934. After four games in which he hit .308 he was shipped to Monessen of the Class D Pennsylvania State League. There he hit .326 in 104 games and collected fifteen home runs.

That September Tommy got a real break. Something happened that was to decide his entire baseball future. He was invited to Cleveland to work out with the Indians. After morning drill, Tommy stayed around for the game—one of the few major-league games he had a chance of watching. This time the famous Yankees were in town and Tommy did little else but watch Babe Ruth. Like other kids of that and succeeding days, Henrich had set Ruth up as his idol. As he saw the Babe pump ball after ball into the right-field stands, Tommy made up his mind. He was not only going to be a ball player, but he was going to play ball with the New York Yankees. Later, after signing with the

Yankees when Judge Landis declared him a free agent, Tommy admitted he had kept his fingers crossed, hoping the Yankees would come after him.

A knee injury kept Henrich out of the 1937 World Series. However, the following year he was an integral part of the Yankee machine that smothered the Chicago Cubs in four straight games. That year Tommy played the outfield exclusively and hit a respectable .270. He drove in ninety-one runs and hit twenty-two home runs.

On October 5, 1938, Henrich played in his first World Series game. In the sixth inning he doubled off Chicago's Bill Lee, winding up with two hits in four times at bat. Oddly, he erred on his only outfield chance. He had one hit in the second game, this time accepting no fielding chances. He was held hitless by Clay Bryant in the third game but he had three put-outs in right field. He collected his final hit in the fourth game, winding up the series with a .250 batting average. This final hit, a home run, was made off the Cubs' great Charlie Root.

Tommy alternated between the outfield and first base during '39 and '40. Lou Gehrig's terrible illness forced his retirement from the Yankee line-up early in the 1939 campaign and Henrich was one of the men Manager Joe McCarthy used to fill the gap. Although an outfielder by preference, Henrich made the shift without protest. The responsibility he felt, however, was reflected in his batting average which climbed no higher than .277. His home-run production fell off

to nine and he had but fifty-seven runs batted in. Figures for the following year show his average up to .307, his home-run production ten and his runs-batted-in totaled fifty-three.

In 1941 he returned to the outfield where he enjoyed his best year as a power hitter. Although his average fell off to .277 he collected thirty-one homers, five triples and twenty-seven doubles and drove in eighty-five runs. That year he was the leading figure in a baseball oddity that was to become a permanent portion of the history of the game. In his own words, a strike-out was to make him more famous than any home run he ever hit, or any defensive play he ever turned in.

The Yankees and the Dodgers were that fall's World Series participants. Before a record crowd, in both attendance and gate receipts, Red Ruffing pitched the Yankees to a 3-2 triumph in the opening game at Brooklyn. A crowd of 68,540 who paid a total of \$265,396 witnessed the contest. The Dodgers evened matters in the second game with a 3-2 decision but New York went ahead in the third contest as Marius Russo threw a four-hitter, 2-1.

Then, in the fourth game, fate coupled the names of Tommy Henrich and Brooklyn catcher Mickey Owen in one of the weirdest occurrences in the history of baseball. All afternoon a strictly partisan Brooklyn crowd had cheered itself hoarse watching the Dodgers grimly battling back to even series footing with the mighty Yankees. Going into the ninth inning of the game Brooklyn had what was apparently a safe

4-3 lead. Relief pitcher Hugh Casey had come on in the fifth to work out of a bases-loaded situation and since then he had turned back the Yankees without a run, allowing only single hits in the sixth and seventh innings.

The ninth inning started innocently enough. Johnny Sturm, the Yankee first baseman, worked Casey to a 3-2 count before grounding to Pete Coscarart. The crowd gave itself over to the expected victory celebration as Casey threw out Red Rolfe. Special police edged onto the field to protect players and equipment from the delirious Brooklyn fans, whose enthusiasm reached new heights as Casey started to work on Tommy Henrich. The count climbed slowly to three and two, prolonging the agony. Then the Brooklyn pitcher went into his windup and came around in his pitching motion. The ball, probably the best curve he ever threw, darted plateward as Henrich stepped forward and brought his bat around smoothly. The crowd held its breath, then exploded into a thunderous cheer as, at the last second, the ball ducked downward out of the path of Henrich's beautifully level swing. Henrich had struck out and the game was over.

But the pitch that had been so deceptive, so perfect was now causing Owen the same trouble it had caused Henrich. While the crowd looked on horrified and while the alert Henrich raced toward first base, the ball broke past the eager-reaching Owen and skidded toward the stands. Owen tore off his mask and went after the ball, but by the time he had fought his way

through the cluster of police to retrieve it, Henrich was perched safely on first and the Yankees were still hanging on to the game.

Casey and Brooklyn never recovered from the shock. Before the side could be retired, Joe DiMaggio singled, sending Henrich to second. Again Casey got two strikes on the next hitter, Charlie Keller, who then doubled home both runs to send the Yankees ahead, 5-4. Dickey walked and Joe Gordon doubled over Jimmy Wasdell's head for two more runs. Finally, after Phil Rizzuto had walked, Pee Wee Reese threw out Johnny Murphy to retire the side. But the Dodgers were done. Murphy set them down in one-two-three order and the teams went into the fifth game with the Yankees holding an insurmountable 3-1 lead.

They wrapped it up the following day. Aided by Tommy Henrich's long home run, they beat the Dodgers and Whit Wyatt 3-1, to reign as world baseball champions.

The year 1941 is important to Tommy Henrich in another respect. That summer he married Eileen O'Reilly. They had met the previous year in the New York hospital where Tommy had gone for treatment of a knee injury. Eileen was a nurse on the floor on which Tommy's room was located. Bedridden, although not really ill, Tommy made his room with its bedside radio unofficial headquarters for the doctors and nurses on duty on that particular floor. It was not uncommon for them to drop in and listen with Tommy to broadcasts of the Yankee games.

Tommy was in the hospital twenty-eight days and during that time he and Eileen got to know each other pretty well—well enough to know they wanted to see more of each other after his discharge. They were married on July 7 of the following year during the regular baseball season lay-off surrounding the All Star game. Tommy asked for and got the day off from the scheduled exhibition game to get married.

The year 1942 saw Tommy's baseball career interrupted. On September 2 he enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard, in which he served until his discharge on September 29, 1945. In the service Tommy fulfilled a life-long ambition—that of playing shortstop lefthanded! All his life he had been consumed with a desire to play the infield position and when he found himself managing a service team in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada, the chance for which he had waited was his. Manager Henrich assigned player Henrich to shortstop and nary a man disputed his decision.

The year 1942 saw Henrich paid a tribute indicative of the popularity he had slowly acquired with the loyal Yankee fans. According to the club's front office, Henrich today has more such than any other active player. One of his legion of followers even goes so far as to keep statistics on games won by Henrich. One year the figure on this record reached twenty out of ninety-odd victories.

On August 30, 1942 the Yankees met the Detroit Tigers in a double-header at Yankee Stadium. None of the 50,398 persons present realized that the day was

to be Henrich's last in a Yankee uniform for three long years. Just as Tommy stepped into the batter's box for his last time in the second game, the announcement came over the public-address system that Henrich had enlisted in the Coast Guard and was leaving for the service immediately after the game. As one, the huge crowd rose and gave him an ovation he will never forget—an ovation that probably meant more to him than the special "day" in his honor the same fans gave him during the 1948 season.

Tommy's answer to the tribute was a single, representing his third hit of the game and fourth of the afternoon in six at-bats.

Perhaps the best insight into Henrich's character, and one of the reasons he is held in such esteem by persons who know him, may be seen from the following incident. It has already been stated what close friends are Tommy and Paul Brown, coach of the Cleveland Browns. In 1946, the year the Browns won the first All-America Conference championship, Brown invited Tommy to the playoff game in Cleveland, even promising him a seat on the players' bench. Yet, much as he wanted to see the game, Tommy didn't accept the invitation. Instead, he remained at home in Massillon to attend a rehearsal for the High Mass he had promised to sing Christmas week in his own church.

Although it isn't generally known, Tommy is a fine musician. In addition to his vocal proficiency, he is an accomplished pianist. He is a leading light in the Yankee's barber-shop quartet and was a member of the

1947 State of Ohio championship barber-shop quartet, a group that identified itself as "The Tom Cats."

Tommy came out of the service in time for the 1946 season. Off to a slow start, the best he could do at the plate was a .251 batting average and eighty-three runs driven in. Then, with a year's baseball under his belt, he really blossomed in 1947, leading the American League in home runs with the bases loaded. He hit four of these payoff blows to tie a mark jointly held by Frank Schulte of the Chicago Cubs, Vince DiMaggio of the Phillies and American Leaguers Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Rudy York.<sup>3</sup> That year he also hit .287 and drove in ninety-eight runs, this despite batting in the number two spot.

Oddly enough, Henrich's two biggest baseball thrills date from his year with Monessen. Let him describe in his own words what he considers to be the best catch he ever made.

"I forget whom we were playing. It doesn't matter. But in order to appreciate the catch I'll have to describe the field on which we were playing. There was a definite slope in right field that ran upwards into center field. A cinder running track cut directly through right field and just a few yards across the track was a three-foot fence of eight-by-eights. During the game a batter hit a long ball into right center. I took a quick look in the direction the ball was headed and then I started running. I ran up the incline into center field, across the cinder track, jumped the three-

<sup>3</sup>See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Sixth Series.



foot fence and turned around just in time to stick my glove up to catch the ball."

The home run Tommy best remembers? That also dates from his Monessen days and concerns a game in which the opposing pitcher was Whitey Moore, the ex-Cincinnati Red. Moore was shutting out the Monessen team. In fact he was on his way to a no-hit game when he was struck on the head by his mound opponent and was unable to continue the game. Though willing, his successors proved far too wild. The succeeding pitchers walked six consecutive men, although still not giving up a single base hit.

Finally the center fielder was pressed into service as a pitcher. The first man he faced was Henrich and as Tommy stepped to the plate the Monessen club president turned to his companion in the stands and offered to buy Henrich "the biggest steak in town" if he got a hit. Tommy's hit, the only one Monessen got all afternoon, was a home run with the bases loaded that gave them the game, 7-6.

After the game Tommy learned of the steak offer and went to the town's best, and only restaurant, to collect. Sure enough, there sat the club owner who promptly paid off with the biggest steak in the house. But, as will happen, the dinner turned into a lengthy bull session and during the evening Tommy's boss called a waiter over to order drinks for his guests. Although of German descent, and thirsty in the bargain, Tommy felt that this was hardly the place to order a glass of beer. Accordingly he asked for a pineapple

sundae. Each time a new round of drinks was ordered, Tommy was served a pineapple sundae.

"I had to eat five of the things before I could get out of the place," Tommy laughed.

Henrich has come a long way from those early Monessen days. Today he is the unofficial captain of the New York Yankees. He is his team's representative on the players' committee—has been since the committee was founded in 1947. At the time of Bucky Harris's removal from the managerial position following the 1948 season, Henrich and Joe DiMaggio were the only players given serious consideration as possible successors by the front office. Those close to the Yankees attach managerial significance to Tommy's recent purchase of the home in nearby Ridgewood, New Jersey where he and Mrs. Henrich and their three children now live.

Tommy's chief value to the Yankees lies in his ability as a team player, one who can come through in a pinch. Bill Dickey, ex-Yankee manager and now coach sums up Tommy's contribution to his team's success in the following words: "A Henrich .290 average would be a .330 average for anybody else." His former manager, Joe McCarthy, continues to marvel at his fielding skill and Joe DiMaggio frequently describes Tommy as "an outfielder who plays ground balls like an infielder."

Henrich has a great throwing arm, one of the best in the business. When he and Frank Crosetti were Yankee teammates they had a play worked out in which

Henrich, fielding ground balls in right field, would fire the ball directly to second base. At the last second Crosetti would break for the bag, arriving in time to slap the perfect throw from Henrich on the chagrined hitter who had thus been trapped into trying for an extra base.

As a fielder Henrich covers remarkable ground. At the Yankee Stadium we have seen him fall into the right-field stands catching high, twisting fouls. Early in the 1949 season he fielded a ball Dom DiMaggio of the Red Sox hit off the fence in left-center field and made the throw in before left fielder Hank Bauer or center fielder Johnny Lindell could get into position for the play.

He is perhaps one of the game's best clutch hitters. In a 1948 game against the Washington Senators, and with the hit and run on, he hit a low-breaking curve into right field behind the runner. In the opening game of the 1949 season, the day they dedicated a plaque at the Yankee Stadium to Babe Ruth, he supplied a fitting climax to the occasion with a game-winning, ninth-inning home run off Sid Hudson. He came back to hit a home run the following day as the Yankees won, 3-0.

He has been named to the All Star team three times, in 1942, '47 and '48. In 1936, while with New Orleans, he led the Southern Association in total bases. In 1938, with the Yankees, he hit five home runs in three consecutive games—the second game of an August 27 doubleheader and single games August 28 and 29. Last year, 1948, he played 146 games, dividing his time

between first base and the outfield, hitting .308, driving in 100 runs and hitting twenty-five home runs and forty-two doubles. His 1949 contract, reported to be for \$40,000, made him the fourth highest player in Yankee history—the others being Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and Joe DiMaggio.

Because of his former years in Massillon, there is no team in baseball Tommy enjoys beating so much as the Cleveland Indians. One day, during the 1948 season, the Yankees were playing the Indians in Cleveland and, as usual, a large number of Tommy's Massillon friends and former neighbors were on hand. Don Black was pitching for the Indians and in a one-out-and-men-on-second-and-third situation, Manager Lou Boudreau ordered Phil Rizzutto walked to get to Henrich.

When Tommy realized Rizzutto was being given an intentional base on balls, he looked toward the Indians' bullpen for the left-hander he expected to come in to pitch to him. Piqued when he saw none, and taking Boudreau's intention of using a right-hander against him as a personal insult, Henrich muttered to on-deck hitter Joe DiMaggio that he'd "at least get the ball to the outfield and drive in one run." Instead he drove in four with a mighty homer.

Two years ago in training camp at St. Petersburg, New York radio announcer Mel Allen hung the nickname "Old Pro" on Henrich. It stuck, probably because it describes better than any other words, the respected position Tommy Henrich enjoys among the baseball players and fans of America.

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## THOMAS DAVID HENRICH

Born, Massillon, Ohio, February 20, 1916.

Bats left. Throws left. Height, 6'. Weight, 170 pounds.

Year	Club	League	Pos.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Ave.	PO	A	E	FA
1934	Monessen	Penn. St.	of	104	387	71	126	16	14	15	70	12	.326	252	28	3	.989
1935	Zanesville	Mid. At. L.	of	115	451	93	152	43	1	12	78	12	.337	276	20	5	.980
1935	New Orleans	S.A.	of	17	63	14	21	6	3	0	10	1	.333	41	1	4	.913
1936	New Orleans*	S.A.	of	157	586	117	203	48	16	15	100	15	.346	393	31	9	.979
1937	Newark	I.L.	of	7	25	4	11	2	2	0	8	0	.410	14	0	0	1.000
1937	New York	AL	of	67	206	39	66	14	5	8	42	4	.320	90	6	3	.970
1938	New York	AL	of	131	471	109	127	24	7	22	91	6	.270	239	14	4	.981
1939	New York	AL	1b-of	99	337	64	96	18	4	9	57	7	.277	207	7	2	.991
1940	New York	AL	1b-of	90	293	57	90	28	5	10	53	1	.307	152	10	5	.970
1941	New York	AL	of	144	538	106	149	27	5	31	85	3	.277	280	13	6	.980
1942	New York	AL	1b-of	127	483	77	129	30	5	13	67	4	.267	278	13	3	.990
1942, 1943, 1944, 1945 in U.S. Coast Guard																	
1946	New York	AL	1b-of	150	565	92	142	25	4	19	83	5	.251	588	32	7	.989
1947	New York	AL	1b-of	142	550	109	158	35	13*	16	98	3	.287	337	14	5	.986
1948	New York	AL	1b-of	146	588	138*	181	42	14*	25	100	2	.308	568	29	11	.982

## COMPLETE MAJOR LEAGUE TOTALS

9 years	1096	4041	791	1138	243	62	153	676	35	.282	2739	138	46	.984
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## WORLD SERIES RECORD

1938	New York	AL	of	4	16	3	4	1	0	1	1	0	.250	6	0	1	.857
1941	New York	AL	of	5	18	4	3	1	0	1	1	0	.167	6	0	0	1.000
1947	New York	AL	of	7	31	2	10	2	0	1	5	0	.323	12	0	0	1.000

## World Series Totals

16	65	9	17	4	0	3	7	0	.262	24	0	1	.960
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\* Declared free agent by Judge Landis in April, 1937, and signed by Yankees for \$25,000.  
 \* Indicates led league or was tied for league leadership.

## ALL STAR TOTALS

1942	A.L.	of	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	.250	2	0	0	1.000
1947	A.L.	of	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	3	0	0	1.000
1948	A.L.	of	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	1	0	0	1.000

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WILLIAM BEN HOGAN

*“Golfdom’s Mighty Mite”*

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WILLIAM BEN HOGAN



## CHAPTER IX

WILLIAM BEN HOGAN  
"GOLFDOM'S MIGHTY MITE"

DUBLIN, TEXAS nestles in the north-central part of the Lone Star State. Despite its small size—its population is approximately three thousand—the town is well on its way to becoming one of the foremost golfing shrines in the country. For there, on the 13th of August, 1912, one of the greatest golfers of this or any era was born. A golfer who, lacking the physical stature and strength of a Lawson Little,<sup>1</sup> a Frank Stranahan or a Byron Nelson,<sup>2</sup> has nevertheless managed to reach the supreme heights of golfdom.

The path to the top was not easy for him. Rather was it a road strewn with setbacks, disappointments and heartache. Yet perseverance, fierce determination and an iron will to win finally paid off for William Ben Hogan.

Most of golfdom's greats seem to have received their starts as caddies. Francis Ouimet<sup>3</sup> set the pattern in the days before World War I and since then a host of name players have traveled the familiar trail from bag-toting to caddy-tournament play and finally the

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Fifth Series.

<sup>2</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Ninth Series.

<sup>3</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Third Series.

big time. In golf, as in anything else worthwhile, the rewards come slowly, and generally only as a consequence of long, self-effacing work. There is no shortcut to fame, no easy road to money and glory. All of which makes arrival at the top of the heap all the more to be savored and enjoyed.

Go back to a day in 1925. Two boys, Royal and Ben Hogan, were looking for a quicker and better way of contributing to the family budget than by selling newspapers after school on the streets of Fort Worth. A nameless friend who later turned out to be one of golf's greatest benefactors, hinted that a bright, hard-working kid could make more money carrying a golf bag for eighteen holes than he could in several afternoons of hawking papers.

The brothers looked at one another. The idea sounded good. What did they have to lose? So, with thirteen-year-old Royal leading the way, they trooped off to nearby Glen Garden Country Club.

There Royal was taken on almost immediately; however, the club professional wasn't quite so sure of little Ben. The quiet, serious-faced youngster looked rather puny to be carting a heavy golf bag across the Texas countryside.

Before the pro could make up his mind, the other club caddies took care of matters—or so they thought. Caddying jobs paid well, too well to be handed out on a silver platter to just any kid who came walking up the driveway with "Please let me in" written all over his face. And didn't it make sense that the fewer caddies there were, the more jobs there would be for

the club regulars? The thing to do was get rid of this little runt and fast!

Before he knew what was happening, young Ben was yanked off his feet, thrust headfirst into an empty barrel and sent hurtling down an uncomfortably bumpy slope. The other caddies shrilled their satisfaction as they watched the barrel thumping and jolting its way down the hill.

Finally, with a last resounding crash the barrel came to rest and young Ben crawled from the wreckage. Cut, bruised, and with his clothing disheveled, he pulled himself erect and started doggedly up the hill toward his tormentors. The caddies looked on, amused, as he picked his way painfully up the hill. Then they chose one of their number, a hulking youngster twice the little fellow's size, to chastise the upstart.

As it turned out, the upstart did most of the fighting. The diminutive Ben gave his bigger opponent a sound thrashing and thereby earned his first golfing job. So, at the age of thirteen, Ben Hogan was firmly embarked on his chosen career.

Fortunately, the Glen Garden Club was a pioneer in caddy-player development. At the conclusion of their regular duties, the club's caddies were allowed to use the course. Royal caddied only intermittently that summer but little Ben was always around. When he wasn't caddying he was playing, and when he wasn't playing he was practicing.

From the beginning he acquired the habit of watching the better players whose bags he toted—how this one used his short irons, how that one took time lining

up his putts, how still another got extra distance on his drives through use of the forward press. That those hours and days and even years of diligent study and work paid off is now common knowledge. Today, despite his slight stature—five feet eight inches in height and weighing no more than a hundred and forty pounds—Hogan is famed as one of golf's longer hitters. The answer lies in his control and what is perhaps the most perfectly grooved swing in the game.

A few years ago Eddie Loos, one of the game's better-known instructors, said of that remarkable Hogan swing: "Through endless hours of play and practice Ben has that swing in a set groove. Any golfer with that type of swing doesn't have to depend too much on concentration. The better the swing, the easier it is to concentrate. It is the duffer who has most of the concentration problems. He knows something is wrong at the top of his swing. He also has too many things to try to think about—foot action, body turn, smooth back, head down, and so forth. No one can concentrate on all those things. But they all come naturally to Hogan now."

The foregoing brings to mind a remark, made half in jest, half in truth, to Bobby Jones<sup>4</sup> by one of his higher scoring companions. "You know, Bobby, I don't think you deserve any credit for your sixty-eights. Not with your swing. Suppose you had to hit the ball with my swing!"

<sup>4</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, First Series.

Some years back, it was in 1940, a tee was built at the peristyle end of Los Angeles' immense Coliseum, the idea being to see if any golfer could drive a ball 250 yards on the fly to the seats at the far end of the vast stadium. Hogan's drive, by actual measurement, carried 253 yards, only twelve yards short of the mark set by Jimmy Thompson. And Thompson outweighs Ben by some seventy pounds! No wonder that Fred Corcoran of the PGA hails Hogan as pound for pound the longest driver in the world.

But to return to Ben's early beginnings. All that first summer young Hogan stuck to his golf. He struck up a friendship with a tall, blond boy named Byron Nelson and it was not uncommon to see them playing together. The following year Ben's brother Royal found a summer job. One morning Ben's mother urged her younger son to do likewise. She advised him that he'd never get anywhere "fooling around golf courses."

Ben's answer was to the effect that he wasn't fooling—he was working, and hard. Some day, he promised Mrs. Hogan, he was going to be one of America's greatest golfers.

The year 1929 was an important one in the life of Ben Hogan. Then, at the age of seventeen, he took himself to San Antonio for the Texas Open, in which tournament he made his professional debut. Oddly, the tournament was also the first professional venture for both Ralph Guldahl<sup>5</sup> and Ray Mangrum.

<sup>5</sup>See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Seventh Series.



Once embarked on his professional career, there was no holding Hogan back. He persisted in his habit of constant practice. Today he is still recognized as the longest-practicing professional in the game. In those early 1930's Ben spent every possible minute on the practice tees and greens. He putted for hours—everything from eighteen-inchers the ordinary golfer would concede himself, to long, straight, twelve-foot strokes that became more and more deadly in their accuracy. But several long, hard years were to pass before Hogan reached the small circle of golf's elite.

Ben's first job was as assistant professional to Ted Longworth at Fort Worth's Oakhurst course. Later he moved thirty miles south to the Cleburne Country Club.

Texas was good to its native son. The long hours of practice in the sun-filled days hardened his wrists and forearms, strengthened his back and put steel into his smoothly working hands. As his game improved, Hogan began casting impatient eyes toward the tough tournament trail. He tried the winter circuit the season of 1932-33 and came home broke. Fifty dollars was the best he could do in the Los Angeles Open, the \$10,000 tournament he was to win in '42, '47 and '48.

In characteristic fashion, Ben learned something from his hard experience. He found that he couldn't concentrate on playing tournament golf when he was worried over such non-professional matters as three square meals a day, lodging and the tankful of gas needed to transport him from stop to stop along the

tournament trail. Accordingly, Ben took drastic measures. He sold his clubs and went to work in order to earn enough money to permit him to make his next winter tour minus day-by-day financial distractions.

In 1937, three years after his abortive start in the California tournaments, he again tried his hand at the winter tournament trail. This time, his name began to appear among the money winners—far down the list, it was true, but with enough frequency to encourage him. Records show that the first money he earned was \$150 for finishing second to Jimmy Thompson in a driving contest at the General Brock Open.

With Ben those early, difficult years on the tough tournament circuit was his wife. In 1937 he had married Valerie Fox, a home-town girl he had known since childhood.

Once he tasted success in the golfing big time, there was no stopping the Texan. In the years from 1937 to '43 he finished in the money in 100 of the 107 tournaments in which he played. In 1938 he finished second in the Miami Four Ball to Dick Metz and Ky Laffoon. Hogan's partner was Willie Goggin. Despite their six-and-five setback in the tournament finals Hogan was encouraged enough to team with Vic Ghezzi for the Hershey Invitational Four Ball. They won that one.

A pair of second-place finishes featured Hogan's 1939 record. He trailed Byron Nelson in the Phoenix Open with a 210 and picked up second money behind Dick Metz in the Land of the Sky Open at Asheville.

He started the 1940 season as runner-up to Jimmy Demaret at Oakland and to Ed Oliver at Phoenix. He fared better in the Texas Open at San Antonio, putting together three rounds of sixty-six to finish in a tie with Byron Nelson. He lost the play-off to the National Open champion, 70-71.

Continuing his rigid schedule of between-tournament practice rounds, Hogan moved on to the Pinehurst, N.C. course where he won the North and South Championship with a 277. In the Land of the Sky Open at Asheville that year he compiled the amazing record of shooting 216 holes of golf in thirty-four under par. During this stretch he broke seventy no less than ten times in twelve rounds for an average of a little better than eleven under par.

Hogan's golf was improving and so was the size of his bank account. After winning professional golf's most prized trophy, the Vardon, in 1940, he had already reached \$10,655, in winnings. Not bad for a player who only a few years back had been content with \$50 and \$100 purses won in driving contests. In 1941 he succeeded Henry Picard as pro at the Hershey, Pennsylvania, Country Club.

In 1941 his earnings reached \$18,358 and he became the first golfer in professional history to win the Vardon Trophy two years in succession. He was again the nation's leading money winner in 1942, the third straight year he had achieved the distinction.

Then, like so many other of his countrymen, Ben Hogan went into uniform. He served in the Air Corps

for three years. In October of 1945, just two weeks after stepping out of uniform, he set a major golf record when he fired a 261 to win the Portland Open. During the four tournament rounds, he broke the previous Portland Country Club mark three times. His margin over runner-up Byron Nelson, the national PGA champion, was exactly fourteen strokes. He was again the nation's leading money winner that year, his golf earnings reaching \$42,556.

In 1946 he set an even hotter pace. Now the national PGA champion, he reeled off successes in the Dallas Invitational, the Goodall Round Robin tournament at Mamaroneck, and the Golden State Open, and was picked as No. 1 golfer of the year, winning thirteen PGA-sponsored tournaments. He started 1947 by winning the Los Angeles Open, the Phoenix Open, the Miami Four Ball with Jimmy Demaret, and the Latham R. Reed pro-amateur tournament at Palm Beach with Mike Phipps. He finished one stroke out of the U.S. Open, blowing his chance to tie Vic Ghezzi, Byron Nelson and Lloyd Mangrum on the sixteenth hole of Cleveland's Canterbury Golf Club when he pushed his second shot into the rough and played his fourth twelve feet past the cup, eventually taking a six on the hole. He "blew" one again in the Masters' Tournament at Augusta, three-putting the last green to finish one stroke behind winner Herman Keiser.

He lost to Tony Penna in the first round of the 1947 PGA event and the word began to go round that, great golfer though he was, maybe Hogan didn't have it

in the pinches when the going was rough. Whether Hogan heard the murmurings or not isn't known. His answer was to spend more time than ever on the practice tee, driving himself unmercifully as he strove for nothing short of perfection. Fellow golfers marveled at his tenacity and determination. He frequently passed up lunch at the various tournaments in which he played in order to get in an extra hour of corrective practice. Nights he spent putting on the carpet of his hotel bedroom. That year he captained the Ryder Cup team that handed the English players the worst defeat in the history of the international competition. In 1948 he made the unprecedented mark of winning the Open, the PGA (for the second time in three years) and the Western Open championships.

Both times in his first two PGA matches he was forced to the last green for decisions and to the next-to-last in the quarter and semi-finals. In the thirty-six hole final he scored a seven-and-six victory over Mike Turnesa, sinking a twenty-five foot putt on the eleventh and scoring his third birdie of the match on the following hole. An odd feature of the match was that Hogan occasionally used an iron or brassie instead of a driver on the shorter holes. So confident was he of success that at one point, the sixteenth hole of the morning round, he conceded his rival a fifteen-foot putt. That year he won the Vardon Trophy for the third time.

At the close of 1948, unquestionably his best tournament year, Hogan had taken a needed two months'

vacation to rest up for the 1949 tournament circuit. His first post-vacation tourney, the Los Angeles Open, saw him tying for fifth place, eight strokes behind winner Lloyd Mangrum. He followed that up with a pair of ties with Jimmy Demaret—in the Phoenix Open and in the Long Beach Open. Hogan won the eighteen-hole play-off at Long Beach, 67-69. In the Phoenix tournament he birdied the par-five 540-yard eighteenth hole to match Demaret's 278. But this time Demaret won the play-off, 67-70. Hogan also took top money in the \$10,000 Bing Crosby tournament at Pebble Beach, California.

Ben and his wife were on their way home from the tournament at Phoenix when an accident occurred—oddly enough on a stretch of road where there wasn't a curve as far as the eye could see in either direction. A bus, traveling at high speed toward the Hogan automobile, pulled out into their lane to pass a slower-moving truck. Despite Hogan's efforts to avoid it, the inevitable collision took place. The two heavy vehicles came together with such impact that the engine of Hogan's car was torn loose and deposited in the front seat and the steering wheel bent back until it touched the back of the seat.

In the moment of collision Ben's thought was instinctively for his wife's safety. Endeavoring to shield her from flying glass, he threw his body across hers as the bus struck, thereby twisting himself out of the path of the steering wheel. Almost ninety minutes elapsed before ambulance aid arrived and Hogan was

rushed the two hundred miles from Van Horn, Texas where the accident occurred, to an El Paso hospital. There his injuries were diagnosed as a fractured pelvis and a broken collarbone. The medical bulletin issued by the attending physicians contained the heartening news that Hogan would be able to play golf again. But it did not venture to guess when.

Messages of condolences and good cheer began to pour in as soon as word of the accident reached the public. The USGA immediately sent Hogan the following wire: "Every good wish for a speedy recovery from all clubs and golfers in the USGA. We look forward to seeing you at the first tee at Medinah." The U.S. Open which Hogan had won in 1948 was scheduled in 1949 for the Medinah, Illinois, Country Club.

Hogan's fellow players were quick to express their sympathy. Jimmy Demaret termed the accident "a very unfortunate thing. Any golfer would be tickled to death to do anything to help him (Hogan) out."

Speaking for his organization, George Schneider said: "The entire Professional Golfers' Association is deeply grieved and we are anxiously awaiting the doctor's final report. We are praying that his injuries will not be permanent. The loss of Hogan in the tournament world could leave a gap that would be extremely difficult to fill. He is one of the most loved champions in the history of the game."

Now thirty-six, golf's greatest competitor is the oldest of the major sports champions. Not exactly jovial, Hogan is nevertheless courteous and considerate even

under major tournament pressure. After missing an eighteen-inch putt to lose the Masters' at Augusta. he sought out newspapermen and asked if he could explain anything to help them with their stories.

Again, after one horrendous round that saw him take an eleven on a par three hole at Jacksonville. Hogan readily answered questions as to his bogey. The secret of his success is contained in Hogan's simple reply. "It didn't bother me," he answered. "I birdied the next hole."

#### WILLIAM BEN HOGAN

- Address: Hershey Country Club, Hershey, Pa.  
Born: August 13, 1912 in Dublin, Texas.  
Service Record: U.S. Army, 1943-45
- 1938: Hershey Four Ball.  
1939: Co-medalist, PGA Championship.  
1940: North and South Open; Greensboro (N.C.) Open; Asheville (N. C.) Open; Goodall Round Robin; Hershey Open; Westchester Open; leading money winner \$10,656; PGA Vardon Trophy, 423 points.  
1941: U.S. Ryder Cup team Miami Four Ball; Chicago Open; Inverness Four Ball; Asheville Open; "In the money" in 56 consecutive tournaments from August 13, 1939 to September 21, 1941; tied PGA record of 62 in Oakland (Calif.) Open; leading money winner, \$18,358; PGA Vardon Trophy, 553 points.  
1942: Los Angeles Open; San Francisco Open; North and South Open; Asheville Open; Hale America Open (tying PGA record of 62 in second round); leading money winner, \$13,143; PGA Vardon Trophy, 400 points.  
1945: Nashville Invitation; Richmond (Va.) Invitation; Montgomery (Ala.) Invitation; Orlando (Fla.) Open; Portland G.C. Invitation (65-69-63-64—261 at Portland Golf Club, Sept. 27-30, set PGA 72-hole record, since lowered). Won by 17 strokes over Byron Nelson, a record margin for PGA tournaments; score was 27 under par.)



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- 1946: PGA Championship; Phoenix Open; Texas Open; North and South Open; Colonial Club Invitation; Dallas Invitation; St. Petersburg Open; Goodall Round Robin; Western Open; Miami Four Ball; Inverness Four Ball; Winnipeg Open; Golden State Open; leading money winner, \$42,556.
- 1947: Captain, U.S. Ryder Cup team; Los Angeles Open; Phoenix Open; Colonial Club Invitation; Miami Four Ball; Inverness Four Ball; Chicago Victory Open; International Invitation at Chicago.
- 1948: USGA Open (276 set record); PGA Championship; Western Open; Los Angeles Open; Bing Crosby pro-amateur; Inverness Four Ball; Motor City Open; Reading Open; Denver Open; Reno Open; Glendale Open; leading money winner, \$32,112; Vardon Trophy (69.30 for 76 rounds).
- 1949: Bing Crosby Invitation; Long Beach Open.

The following list of 18 holes were recently picked by Ben Hogan as the toughest 18 in America. In making his selections, Hogan picked the toughest No. 1 hole, the toughest No. 2 hole, and so on. The list follows:

1. Oak Hill Country Club, Pittsford, N. Y.
2. Riviera Country Club, Los Angeles, Calif.
3. Colonial Country Club, Fort Worth, Texas
4. Riviera Country Club, Los Angeles, Calif.
5. Colonial Country Club, Fort Worth, Texas
6. Pinehurst Country Club, Pinehurst, N.C.
7. Brook Hollow Country Club, Dallas, Texas
8. Pebble Beach Country Club, Pebble Beach, Calif.
9. Boca Raton Country Club, Boca Raton, Fla.
10. Whitemarsh Valley Country Club, Philadelphia, Pa.
11. Pinehurst Country Club, Pinehurst, N.C.
12. Southern Hills Country Club, Tulsa, Okla.
13. Augusta National Golf Club, Augusta, Ga.
14. Cherry Hills Club, Denver, Colo.
15. Riviera Country Club, Los Angeles, Calif.
16. Cypress Point Club, Pebble Beach, Calif.
17. Winged Foot Golf Club, Mamaroneck, N.Y.
18. Pebble Beach Country Club, Pebble Beach, Calif.

The list appeared in *Sports World*.

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LONGWOOD—AND THE RISING  
TENNIS GENERATION

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ROBERT (BOB) FALKENBURG



## CHAPTER X

### LONGWOOD—AND THE RISING TENNIS GENERATION

THE cry of "the king is dead, long live the king" ringing through the corridors of American tournament tennis at the close of the 1947 indoor season initiated one of the most remarkable trends in the history of the court game in the United States. In December of that year, Jack Kramer, the World's leading amateur player, turned professional, leaving the matter of succession to his vacated throne to be decided among players of his own generation and the young crop of future stars just beginning to come of age.

Kramer's dominance of the national and international tennis picture in 1947 was complete. He was American national outdoor champion, national outdoor doubles champion with Ted Schroeder, national indoor champion, national indoor doubles champion with Bob Falkenburg and the unquestioned star of the United States Davis Cup team. He was also Wimbledon singles champion and, again with Bob Falkenburg, Wimbledon doubles champion.

Kramer's surrender of his amateur titles found United States tennis fortunes at an all-time high. Not only were the Talberts, Mulloys and Schroeders well

able to step forward and assume the coveted mantle of the departed king—a whole new crop, nurtured under the careful developmental program of the United States Lawn Tennis Association, was just about ready for the harvesting. Consequently, when the lists were thrown open immediately upon Kramer's abdication, there ensued perhaps the greatest struggle for national honors this country has known.

Buddy Behrens, Arthur Larsen, Sam Match, Vic Seixas, Herbie Flam, Harry Likas, Pancho Gonzales, Budge Patty. Bob Falkenburg and Irving Dorfman were but a few of the more talented younger players who stepped forth to challenge for the national crown.

Less marked was the transition in the women's field, where the old order pretty much continued to hold sway. Again the field was dominated by Louise Brough, Margaret Osborne duPont, Patricia Canning Todd, Dorothy Head, Shirley Fry, Doris Hart and Nancy Chaffee. During 1948 Gertrude Moran, Helen Pastall Perez and ambidextrous Beverly Baker shouldered their way to the fore.

Once again in 1948 the national doubles were held at famed Longwood Cricket Club in Brookline, Massachusetts, where they had taken place with but three exceptions since 1919.

Founded in 1877 as a cricket club, it took just eighteen years for tennis to crowd cricket off the club's program. The first national doubles were played there in 1881, the year the United States Lawn Tennis Association was founded. And just nineteen years later the

first Davis Cup matches,<sup>1</sup> conceived by club member Dwight F. Davis, were played at Longwood. Further impetus to the cause of international tennis was furnished by famed club member Mrs. Hazel Hotchkiss Wightman<sup>2</sup> who, in 1923, put in play the women's cup for which teams representing this country and England have annually striven.

Seeded teams in the 1948 men's national doubles field were Bill Talbert and Gardnar Mulloy, No. 1; Frank Parker and Ted Schroeder, No. 2; Fred Kovalesski and Jack Tuero, No. 3; James Brink and Dick Gonzales, No. 4; and Sam Match and Vic Seixas, No. 5. Top-seeded foreign players were Geoff Brown and Colin Long of Australia, No. 1; Czechs Vladimir Cernik and Jaroslav Drobny, No. 2; Australians Adrian Quist and Billy Sidwell, No. 3; Enrique Morea of Argentina and Eric Sturges of South Africa, No. 4; and Tony Mottram and Vimi Rurac, No. 5. Defending 1947 runners-up Bill Talbert and Billy Sidwell were this time on opposite sides of the net.

Top-seeded in the women's division were six-time winners, Louise Brough and Margaret Osborne duPont. Second-seeded American players were Doris Hart and Patricia Canning Todd, while ranked third were Virginia Woolfenden Kovacs and Marjorie Gladman Buck. Joy Gannon and Betty Hilton of England were top-seeded in the foreign field with the team of Magda Rurac and Gertrude Moran ranked second.

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Sixth Series.

<sup>2</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Fifth Series.



Lone upset of the opening day's play saw fifth-seeded foreigners Vimi Rurac and Tony Mottram eliminated by a pair of vigorously stroking Californians, Straight Clark and Gil Shea, 6-4, 6-4, 6-2. Main interest the second day was provided by the official announcement of the United States team that would defend the Davis Cup. As had been expected, Frank Parker, Ted Schroeder, Bill Talbert and Gardner Mulloy comprised the team.

A blistering sun and temperatures that hovered constantly close to the 100° mark combined to take their toll of foreign stars on the third day of play. In perhaps the most startling upset of the tournament to date, Adrian Quist and Billy Sidwell of the Australian Davis Cup team were eliminated by unseeded Budge Patty and Sidney B. Wood. After losing the first set, 4-6, Wood and Patty swept the next three to run out the match 8-6, 6-1, 6-4. Evidently more at home in the heat were Eric Sturgess of South Africa and Enrique Morea of Argentina who ousted Seixas and Match, 6-2, 6-4, 6-4.

Play in the quarter-finals was marked by the upset of Jim Brink and Dick Gonzales by unseeded Tom Brown and Irv Dorfman. That day, with the heat at 103°, spectators in the uncovered stands shared the suffering of the players. Talbert and Mulloy scored a straight-set win over Wood and Patty, 8-6, 6-4, 6-3. Parker and Schroeder were forced to five sets before conquering Sturgess and Morea, 6-4, 3-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4.

The finals became an all-United States affair the fol-

lowing day when Frank Parker and Ted Schroeder ousted Australian Davis Cuppers Colin Long and Geoff Brown, 15-13, 6-2, 6-3 while Bill Talbert and Gar Mulloy eliminated Tom Brown and Irving Dorfman, 3-6, 9-7, 6-4 and 13-11. Women's finalists were Pat Todd and Doris Hart, who ousted Virginia Woolfenden Kovacs and Majorie Gladman Buck, 6-2, 6-4, and Louise Brough and Margaret Osborne duPont who had previously eliminated Shirley Fry and Sheila Summers, 6-2, 7-5.

On Sunday, and for the seventh straight time, the Brough-duPont combine prevailed, 6-4, 8-10, 6-1. With Miss Brough being broken on service two times in the eighteen-game second set, it was Mrs. duPont who carried the major burden, with her steadier play ultimately carrying the day.

The men's finals provided all the top-flight tennis which had been expected. Despite Parker's and Schroeder's early blistering pace, it soon became evident that five sets would be needed to settle the outcome. Interesting factor in the early stages of the match was Parker's abandonment of his cautious, retrieving game for a slashing, forcing attack that carried his team through the first set, 6-1. With Parker and Schroeder continuing to force play at the net, Mulloy and Talbert began to have better luck with their placements and lobs, squaring the match, 9-7. They went on to win, 6-3, 3-6, 9-7, the triumph being the fourth since 1942 for the Talbert-Mulloy team.

After a lapse of nine years, the Inter-Zone Davis Cup

finals were again played at Longwood. In August of 1939 Australia had defeated Yugoslavia at Longwood and then gone on to defeat the United States in the challenge round at Philadelphia. This time, in 1948, the Inter-Zone finalists were the Australian and Czechoslovakian teams. Australia got away to an almost insurmountable lead the first day when, after Captain Adrian Quist had turned in an expected win over Vladimir Cernik, 6-2, 13-11, 6-0, little Billy Sidwell achieved a magnificent victory over top European star, Jaroslav Drobny.

Sidwell surprised everyone by sweeping the first two sets of the match, 6-3, 6-2. Drobny rallied to take the third set, 11-9, breaking Sidwell's service in the twentieth game. The final set was remarkable for the sustained excellence of the tennis displayed by the tiring players. Sidwell seized a first game advantage by breaking Drobny's service; however the Czech quickly retaliated. They exchanged the next two games until Drobny ran out the following three to take a 5-2 lead. Drobny was having trouble with the playing surface, several times taking heavy falls on the dewy turf. At this point little Sidwell battled grimly back to even terms, finally forging ahead, 6-5. They fought on even terms this way through the twenty-fourth game, at which point the Australian pulled himself together for a concerted effort. He swept the next two games and the match.

Drobny and teammate Cernik won the doubles match the following day, defeating Colin Long and

Geoff Brown, 10-8, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 to keep alive Czechoslovakian hopes of entering the Challenge Round. Then, in the deciding match on Sunday, August 22nd, Sidwell was again the Australian hero as he defeated Vladimir Cernik, 7-5, 6-4, 6-2. Drobny had previously squared the match with a gallant uphill victory over Captain Quist, 6-8, 3-6, 18-16, 6-3, 7-5.

Later, the United States team of Parker, Schroeder, Talbert and Mulloy swept to a 5-0 victory over the Australians in the Challenge Round at Forest Hills. Parker conquered Billy Sidwell in straight sets, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4; Ted Schroeder topped Adrian Quist, 6-3, 4-6, 6-0, 6-0; Talbert and Mulloy took the doubles from Sidwell and Colin Long, 8-6, 9-7, 2-6, 7-5; Schroeder defeated Sidwell, 6-2, 6-1, 6-1 and Parker completed the rout with a 6-2, 6-2, 6-3 win over Adrian Quist.

Despite the overwhelming United States victory, tennis observers and experts were fairly unanimous in declaring that perhaps the time for an over-all change in American cup personnel had finally come. Schroeder, the 1942 men's singles champion, was known to be less and less interested in tournament tennis and increasingly more concerned with his refrigeration business in California. His Florida investments were occupying more and more of Mulloy's time and Parker, who first appeared in the top ten USLTA rankings in 1933, was generally regarded as nearing the end of his peak effectiveness.

A glance at the comparative rankings for 1947 and '48 is indicative of the gradual change that was taking

place on the national scene. In 1947, the top ten players had been, in order, Jack Kramer, Frank Parker, Ted Schroeder, Gar Mulloy, Bill Talbert, Pancho Segura, Bob Falkenburg, Ed Moylan, Earl Cochell and Seymour Greenberg. In 1948 the order was Richard Gonzales, Schroeder, Parker, Talbert, Falkenburg, Cochell, Vic Seixas, Mulloy, Herb Flam and Harry Likas. Four players, Gonzales, Seixas, Flam and Likas entered the top ten, displacing Moylan and Greenberg. Segura and Kramer surrendered their rankings when they turned professional.

Biggest surprise of the 1948 season and the man considered most likely to dominate the tennis scene in the United States during the years immediately ahead was, of course, Richard "Pancho" Gonzales. Ranked a low 17th in 1947, Gonzales' list of tournament wins the following year records an almost unbelievable string of successes. He won the national outdoor singles, the clay-court singles and the indoor singles to sweep the three major titles. He teamed with Frank Parker to win the Pan-American doubles. He won the Southampton Invitation and the California State championships. In winning the national singles he fought his way past Jaroslav Drobny before a crowd of 11,000 at Forest Hills, 8-10, 11-9, 6-0, 6-3, and then defeated Eric Sturgess in the final round, 6-2, 6-3, 14-12. He won the New Jersey State championship and the Washington State championship.

Richard Alonzo Gonzales was born May 9, 1928 in Los Angeles, California. His father, a furniture

finisher and set painter in Hollywood, had come to the United States from Mexico in 1918 and his mother four years later. Aside from Pancho, the family includes six brothers and sisters.

Two important things happened to Pancho before he was thirteen years old. One day during his seventh year, he ran his scooter into an automobile with sufficient force to emerge from the accident with a permanent scar on his left cheek. Today, with the casual indifference that characterizes his off-the-court conduct, he refers to that scar as his "lucky piece."

The second important thing occurred Christmas Day of 1940 when, at the age of twelve, he received his fist tennis racquet. In this case, perhaps "racket" would be a more appropriate spelling, for that is exactly what young Pancho proceeded to create. Using the garage door as his first practice court, he nearly drove his family out of their collective minds with the constant pounding that accompanied his batting the ball back and forth.

All that year he continued to practice, eventually sacrificing his schoolwork for tennis until, finally, he was putting in more time on the courts than he was in the schoolroom.

Eventually, this deliberate flouting of California law caught up with him. In 1943, when he was fifteen, he was beginning to create a mild stir in Southern California junior tennis circles. He had beaten Herb Flam four straight times and was apparently running out of opposition. Observers who had watched the

remarkable game of the future champion were even then predicting a brilliant future for him. Then, suddenly, he was barred from tournament tennis.

In Southern California they have a rule that requires all junior tennis players to attend school regularly. Perry Jones, the father of junior tennis on the Coast, works hand in hand with the school authorities to see that the rule is enforced. If, on the complaint of any school board, a junior player is charged with and found guilty of cutting classes, he is immediately suspended from state tennis activity until such time as he has reformed and made up the deficiency.

That is precisely what happened to Gonzales. Jones called the young renegade into his office and, after explaining the unfairness of Pancho's extra hours of practice while Flam and other junior players were in school studying, told him he was barred from further play. Perhaps sociologists or psychiatrists would have a different explanation for Pancho's stubborn and defiant attitude. Friends who knew him in those days attribute it to his physical maturity that far outstripped his actual years.

Bigger, more talented athletically than other kids of his age, Gonzales began to travel with an older crowd. Consequently, when the war came and his boyhood friends went into the armed service, he was still under draft age. Too young for the war and, by his own feeling, too old for the kids with whom he was thrown in contact in school, Gonzales drifted away from his books.

Credence for this explanation is furnished by Pan-

cho's Navy enlistment as soon as he became of age. He entered the Navy in October 1945, spending sixteen months as a seaman 2/c on a Pacific transport. Obviously, he never got near a tennis racquet, let alone a court, during that time.

Discharged in January 1947, Pancho was a changed boy. Naval service had taught him obedience to orders, self-discipline and the recognition of constituted authority. Thanks to the foregoing his mental and emotional maturity now more closely approximated his numerical age.

Having been away from tennis for so many months, he knew he had a lot to do. The moment Pancho got home he headed for the Exposition Park courts. There he practiced hours on end, playing anyone who would give him a game and just as often working by himself when school hours deprived him of opponents. For, with his attaining maturity, had come the natural solution to the school problem. Now over eighteen, he was no longer required by law to attend school and what the law did not demand, Pancho was agreeable to omit.

Once he considered his game ready to resume where he had left off, Gonzales sent his entry for the Southern California championships to Perry Jones. After thoughtful study Jones decided it was only fair Pancho be given a second chance. His victory in that tournament set Gonzales' feet on the tournament trail.

If Pancho has a weakness in his game, it is perhaps with his backhand which at all counts, must at least be considered adequate. His service and forehand



are flawless. His slashing, attacking game and ability to come from behind for crucial points combine to give him the gallery appeal so necessary to an outstanding champion.

Since the war he has learned how to comport himself. After the Southern California championships, Jones was sufficiently pleased with Pancho's personal improvement to send him on a tour of the summer tournaments—a tour financed by \$1,000 from the SCA treasury. At the conclusion of the tour, Pancho marched into the Association's office and handed over the \$98 that remained from the original sum!

Intent as he is about his game, Gonzales is inordinately careless about the trophies he brings home. Before his marriage the mantel in his parents' home was covered with the numerous cups and trophies he has won—all of them uninscribed. Engraving costs money, and besides, Pancho is more interested in the cup he is going to win than he is in the one he has just acquired.

Bobby Riggs calls him "a great asset to amateur tennis." He continues, "This much is sure. Pancho, because of his severe style of play, and because of his enormous personal appeal, will revitalize public interest in amateur tennis. He will pull up the slack left by Kramer's departure and, by being yet another champion to rise from a relatively humble background, will assist immeasurably in the steady democratization of tennis."

One of the major surprises of the 1948 season was

the victory of fifth-seeded American Bob Falkenburg over Jack Bromwich in the singles finals at Wimbledon. However, the erratic Falkenburg was unable to maintain his brilliance and effectiveness, for, returning to the United States, he quickly lost at Seabright and Newport to Harry Likas, to Ted Schroeder in the Eastern Grass Courts and to Jaroslav Drobny at Forest Hills.

Possessor of one of the most devastating services in the game today, Falkenburg's chief difficulty seems to lie in an apparent inability to pace himself properly. Frequently the conclusion of one of his matches will find him in a state bordering upon complete exhaustion. Too, his court conduct has been open to criticism. In his match with Bromwich, Falkenburg was severely censured by the British press for deliberately throwing sets to his older opponent, or so they claimed, in order to rest himself.

The 1948 Wimbledon champion was born in New York City, January 29, 1926. His father, an engineer, is a six-footer who was one of the greatest football and baseball players in the history of Santa Clara University. His mother was one of the top women players of her day, reigning as Brazilian tennis champion in 1928 and '29.

With such an athletic background, it was small wonder that Bob won his first tournament at the age of nine. Playing with a plus-forty handicap, which meant that he had to take only one point per game to win it, he captured the Los Angeles Tennis Club tournament,

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defeating a grown man in the finals! By the time he was thirteen he had collected over a hundred silver cups—all while just playing in California. That year he went East to compete in the national amateur for fifteen-year-olds and under. He placed third.

The next two years he won the tournament. At sixteen he placed third in the tournament for eighteen-year-olds and under, winning the National Junior Doubles with Budge Patty as well as the Interscholastic title. At seventeen he won the National Junior Singles and Doubles and attracted considerable attention by placing second in the Men's Doubles. The following year he teamed with Don McNeil to win the Men's Doubles.

Until 1947 Falkenburg's greatest difficulty, and one which he shared with the country's leading players, was an inability to defeat Jack Kramer. In the 1947 indoor singles finals it took Kramer but forty-five minutes to take care of him.

Another player who made his mark on tennis-conscious America in 1948 was E. Victor Seixas, Jr., the University of North Carolina star. Ranked number eleven in 1947, Seixas climbed four notches in 1948, also receiving the William M. Johnston award for outstanding sportsmanship. His three major wins in 1948 were against Bill Talbert at Orange, Ted Schroeder at Newport and Jaroslav Drobny in the Pacific Southwest Championships at Los Angeles.

Seixas was the only member of the so-called "new

crop of players" given serious consideration for the 1948 United States Davis Cup team. Fast on his feet and possessed of a steady volleying game, he is one of the brightest prospects to come along in American tennis circles in recent years.

The upsurge of new talent so apparent in men's circles in 1948 was also noticeable, albeit to a lesser extent, in the women's field. USLTA rankings for 1947 had Louise Brough listed first, followed in order by Margaret Osborne duPont, Doris Hart, Patricia Canning Todd, Shirley Fry, Barbara Krase, Dorothy Head, Mary Arnold Prentiss, Gertrude Moran and Helen P. Rihbany. In 1948 the order found Mrs. duPont ranked first, notably on the strength of her victory over doubles partner Louise Brough in the national singles. She was followed by Miss Brough, Doris Hart, Gertrude Moran, Beverly Baker, Patricia Canning Todd, Shirley Fry, Helen Pastall Perez, Virginia W. Kovacs and Mrs. Rihbany. Miss Moran's jump from ninth the preceding year to fourth, and Miss Baker's initial entry into the top ten were the most notable individual achievements.

Miss Moran accomplished the biggest upset of the 1948 women's singles tournament by defeating Doris Hart, 6-4, 6-4. Oddity of Miss Moran's entry into this country's so-called tennis elite is that, unlike a majority of athletes who embarked upon their careers early in life, worked long and only achieved success after a lengthy period of apprenticeship, Miss Moran began

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at a rather late age and after an even later start in her chosen sport. Now twenty-six, she didn't take up the game seriously until her late teens.

Although she started playing when she was twelve and within a few years was regarded as an important prospect in Southern California, she lost interest in the game and didn't play seriously for several years. Finally, when she did, she was faced with the added handicap of having to train herself for tournament play years after attaining her physical maturity. Training her body to do the things that come more easily to a teen-age youngster was a lengthy, painstaking process. Muscles grown soft through idleness had to learn all over again how to swing a racquet, how to run, change direction, chop, stroke, serve.

Not until 1945 did she make her first swing of the Eastern grass-courts circuit, a swing incidentally, financed by herself. Unlike men's champion Pancho Gonzales who has yet to take his first lesson, Gertrude, or Gussie as she is more commonly known, had a great deal of help from Bill Tilden<sup>\*</sup> and teacher Eleanor Tennant.

Independent almost to a fault, Gussie defied Southern California amateur authorities during the war years by accompanying Tilden and a group of mixed amateur and professional players on a tour of Army camps.

Gussie's first noteworthy achievement came in the 1946 national championships at Forest Hills. Un-

<sup>\*</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, First Series.

ranked and unseeded, she managed to reach the quarter-finals, in the process taking from Pauline Betz the only set that she lost in the tournament. In 1947 Gussie won the national clay court doubles with Mary Arnold Prentiss, six years after she and Louise Brough had won the national girls' doubles. Last year, 1948, she got all the way to the semi-finals of the women's national singles before losing to eventual winner Margaret Osborne duPont, 10-8, 6-4. On the way she scored a 6-4, 6-4 victory over power-hitting Doris Hart of Miami. In March of 1949 she won the U.S. women's indoor singles tournament, defeating Nancy Chaffee in the finals, 6-2, 6-3.

Undoubtedly one of the most interesting players to gain national attention during the 1948 season, and a court star of whom great things are expected in the near future, was ambidextrous Beverly Baker, the national singles girl champion and with Marjorie McCord, girls' doubles champion. In the national women's singles she got as far as the quarter-final round where she ran up against Margaret Osborne duPont. Despite victory in the first set, she succumbed to the international veteran, 1-6, 6-2, 6-0.

Short—she is only five feet four inches tall—Beverly complained to her father and coach that she was unable to get the desired reach on her backhand. On his advice, she switched her racquet to her left hand, thereby inaugurating the double-forehand style she uses. She plays no backhands. Although she serves with her right hand, she is equally adept at making

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placements, returns or volleys with either hand. Now nineteen and a student at the University of California at Los Angeles, Beverly had an early beginning in tournament tennis when, at the age of fourteen, her father entered her in the fifteen-and-under and eighteen-and-under singles championships in the Pacific Southwest tournament. She defeated top-ranked Barbara Scofield, 6-4, 6-3, and reached the finals in both divisions.

She started the 1947 season as national public parks women's singles champion. She won the national hard court junior championship but was defeated by Nancy Chaffee in the national junior championship semi-finals.

In 1948, accompanied by fellow Californians Helen Perez and Nancy Chaffee, she played the Pacific Northwest circuit, winning the Denver, Tacoma, Seattle, Vancouver and Salt Lake City championships. Thus fortified, she went after the leading woman players. In the Coronado, California tournament she lost to older, wiser, stronger Gussie Moran, 7-5, 8-6, picking up valuable pointers from her more court-wise opponent. A few weeks later she met American singles champion Louise Brough, carrying her to 11-9 before losing the second set, 6-1. In the Maidstone invitational tournament at Easthampton she defeated Patricia Canning Todd in straight sets. She defeated Shirley Fry in the Eastern grass-court championship and won the national junior singles championship with the loss of but sixteen games in seven matches.

Coached by her father and with her mother looking after her physical training, the hard-hitting, two-fisted Californian gives every indication of going far in coming American and international tennis circles.

## 1948 TENNIS

USLTA singles champion Richard Gonzales (def. Eric Sturgess, 9-7, 6-3, 6-2)

USLTA Women's singles champion Margaret Osborne duPont (def. Louise Brough, 4-6, 6-4, 15-13)

USLTA Men's doubles Gardnar Mulloy, William F. Talbert (def. Frank Parker, Ted Schroeder, 1-6, 9-7, 6-3, 3-6, 9-7)

USLTA Women's doubles A. Louise Brough, Margaret Osborne duPont (def. Doris Hart, Patricia Canning Todd, 6-4, 8-10, 6-1)

USLTA Clay Court Men's Singles Richard Gonzales (def. Clarence Carter, 7-5, 6-2, 6-3)

USLTA Clay Court Men's Doubles Sam Match, Tom Chambers (def. Tom Brown, Richard Gonzales, 10-8, 7-5, 6-3)

USLTA Clay Court Women's Singles Magda Rurac (def. Dorothy Head, 6-2, 6-0)

USLTA Hard Court Champion Frederick R. Schroeder

USLTA Hard Court Doubles Champions Frederick R. Schroeder, E. Victor Seixas

USLTA Hard Court Women's Champion Gertrude Moran

USLTA Hard Court Women's Doubles Champion A. Louise Brough, Margaret Osborne duPont

USLTA Hard Court Mixed Doubles Champions Margaret Osborne duPont, Thomas P. Brown, Jr.

## USLTA RANKINGS

## MEN'S SINGLES

- |                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Richard A. Gonzales         | 6. Earl H. Cochell       |
| 2. Frederick R. Schroeder, Jr. | 7. E. Victor Seixas, Jr. |
| 3. Frank A. Parker             | 8. Gardnar Mulloy        |
| 4. William F. Talbert          | 9. Herbert Flam          |
| 5. Robert Falkenburg           | 10. Harry E. Likas, Jr.  |

## WOMEN'S SINGLES

- |                            |                               |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Margaret Osborne duPont | 6. Patricia Canning Todd      |
| 2. A. Louise Brough        | 7. Shirley June Fry           |
| 3. Doris Hart              | 8. Helen Pastall Perez        |
| 4. Gertrude Moran          | 9. Virginia Woolfenden Kovacs |
| 5. Beverly Joyce Baker     | 10. Helen Pedersen Rihbany    |



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### BRITISH SINGLES CHAMPION

Robert Falkenburg

A. Louise Brough

### BRITISH DOUBLES CHAMPIONS

John Bromwich

A. Louise Brough

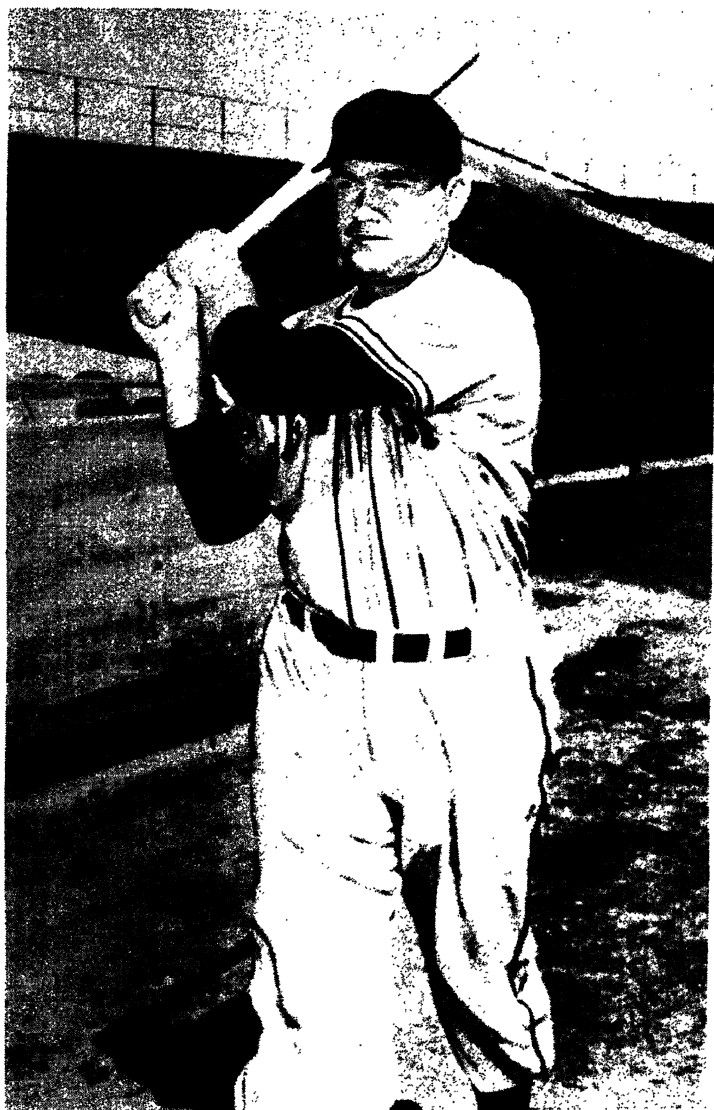
Gardnar Mulloy

Margaret Osborne duPont

JOHN ROBERT (JOHNNY) MIZE

*“The ‘Big Cat’ ”*





**JOHN ROBERT (JOHNNY) MIZE**



## CHAPTER XI

JOHN ROBERT (JOHNNY) MIZE  
"THE 'BIG CAT'"

ON MAY 18, 1949 the New York Giants were in Pittsburgh. A crowd of 14,240 in Forbes Field looked on as Larry Jansen and Bob Muncrief, the opposing pitchers, settled down to what gave every indication of being a pretty fair mound duel.

In the top of the first inning the Giants scored a run to take a 1-0 lead; however, two innings later, in their half of the third, the Pirates ganged up on Jansen for three runs. Then, in the Giant fourth, Johnny Mize, the burly first baseman, stepped up and crashed one of Muncrief's offerings into the right-field bleachers to make the score 3-2. Mize completed his methodical tour of the bases, unaware of the minor celebration taking place in the New York dugout. It was not until he had crossed home plate and made his way back to the bench that he learned the home run he had just hit had tied him with Joe DiMaggio of the New York Yankees for leadership in total home runs among players still active in the majors with 303.

Johnny accepted his teammates' congratulations methodically. In the sixth inning, his next time at bat, he rifled a second home run from the very chagrined

## 200 FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES

Muncrief to assume leadership in home runs in the active-players department.

Even then Mize refused to become excited. Quiet, unemotional, workmanlike, the big fellow has the enviable faculty of never allowing the mistakes or achievements of the day before to upset his equilibrium. Neither does he worry about what lies in the immediate offing. His philosophy might best be expressed by the biblical text "sufficient unto the day are the evils thereof."

Playing the major share of his games at the Polo Grounds, since his sale to the New York Giants in 1941, Mize has repeatedly given the lie to detractors who claim that he has been aided by the close right-field fence. A pull hitter, although not a strict pull hitter, Mize has probably seen as many long drives hauled down in deep right center field as have fallen into the bleacher seats for home runs. For, as a rule, Mize home runs carry the master's personal trademark. They are well hit and usually carry appreciable distances. One hit in spring training in Tampa, Florida, in 1935, traveled more than 500 feet.

John Robert Mize was born January 7, 1913 in Demorest, Georgia, a town of perhaps seven hundred people. When he was three years old he was sent to live with his maternal grandmother, a Mrs. Loudermilk, and it was by this woman that he was raised.

Johnny received his early schooling in Demorest. After grade school he attended Piedmont College in his home town for two years. Nevertheless he played

on the Piedmont varsity baseball team for four seasons. This came about via a prep-school attendance which, because of an association with Piedmont College, permitted its students to play on the college team, provided they could make it. Johnny was a regular on the college team when he was only fifteen years of age.

At college Mize alternated between the outfield and first base, although he had an admitted preference for the infield position. Johnny's college coach was Harry Forester, a former pitcher in the Southern Association.

Summers the strapping youngster hired out with some semi-pro team in the vicinity, thereby managing to play baseball the greater part of the year. Other times he hunted and fished.

In 1930, his second year of college, he was playing with a semi-pro team in Toccoa, Georgia, when Frank Rickey, brother of Cardinal farm chief Branch Rickey, dropped into town to see him play. It didn't take Rickey long to make the youngster realize that his future lay in baseball. Johnny signed with the St. Louis organization and was sent to Greensboro of the Piedmont League. There he took part in twelve games, all as an outfielder, and compiled an anemic .194 batting average. The following year he really got going, playing ninety-four games in the outfield and jumping his average to .337. He also earned a promotion to Elmira.

There he was managed by Jack Bentley and later by Clay Hopper. One day Branch Rickey himself came to Elmira on a routine survey of Cardinal farm teams.



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The shrewd Rickey, after observing Mize at the plate and later in the outfield, dropped a hint to Hopper that he try Mize at first base in place of the regular first-sacker who was then in a slump. Accordingly, the shift was made. Success of the move may be seen from Mize's 106-game average of .326. The following year with Greensboro Johnny played nothing but first base, compiling a .360 batting average, hitting twenty-two home runs and driving in 104 runs.

During the season he was moved up to Rochester of the International League, just one step below the majors. And, despite the abruptness of the jump from Greensboro to Triple A ball, Mize almost matched his Greensboro average with a solid .352 in the forty-two games he spent in Rochester uniform.

Mize was well on his way, actually on the threshold of a major-league career that gave every promise of certain stardom, when misfortune struck him a cruel blow. Early in the 1934 season he lined a double off the right-field fence in Rochester. While running from first to second he felt something snap in his left leg. He made it to second all right but when he tried to stand and walk he was unable to do so. He was carried from the field and his injury diagnosed later as a severe muscle tear in the groin.

Despite medical treatment which failed to heal the injury, Johnny returned to the lineup and took part in ninety games. Although his physical condition and the fact that the daily stretching and running were doing his leg injury no good, he hit .339, drove in sixty-

six runs and hit seventeen homers. Such was his reputation that several major-league teams made overtures to the Cardinals for his services, this in spite of the known seriousness of his leg injury.

Christmas Eve of 1934 the Cardinals finally sold him to the Cincinnati Reds on an optional basis. The Reds were to give Mize a trial in spring training of 1935 and if his leg stood up to their satisfaction, they were to keep him. However, were they dissatisfied as to his condition, they could return him to the Cardinals and the Cardinals would refund the \$50,000 the Reds had paid for him.

That is precisely what happened. Apprehensive about Mize's injury after a look at him in action, the Reds reluctantly handed him back to the Cardinals who immediately sent him to Rochester. A pennant-winning team in 1934, the Cards were more than well-set at first base with James "Ripper" Collins.

Playing on a game leg, the big fellow limped through sixty-five games with Rochester. Despite his painful injury, he managed to hit .317 and drive in forty-four runs. Remarkable were the eleven doubles he managed to run out.

In the winter of 1935-6 the Cardinals brought Mize to St. Louis for a thorough physical checkup. An operation, both dangerous and delicate, was suggested to remove the bone growth which had resulted from the original muscle tear. At best it was rather a slim chance. The operation might cure the condition—or it might end permanently Mize's playing days. The decision was

left up to him. Johnny told the Cardinals to go ahead with the operation. It was performed by Doctor Robert F. Hyland. After the bone growth was cut away, Mize went home to recuperate and await the approaching spring training season which held the answer to his baseball future.

In spring training Johnny's performance was such that he opened the season at first base for the Cardinals. For perhaps a month he hit National League pitchers with the same authority with which he had treated minor-league moundsmen. Then he fell into a slump and was taken out of the lineup. Meanwhile Rip Collins, Mize's replacement at first base, began hitting. It looked like Johnny was in for a protracted spell on the bench. Then, in June, Manager Frisch sent him up to pinch hit. Mize responded by knocking the ball out of Sportsman's Park with two on. On his next trip up, this time on trial as a right fielder, he hammered a home run with the bases loaded. The two swings of his bat, driving in seven runs, convinced Frisch that perhaps Mize deserved another chance in the lineup.

A big-leaguer from the start in every sense of the word, Mize compiled a remarkable record in his first thirty-four games in the National League. Of the thirty-nine hits he made in the thirty-four games, eleven were doubles, four were triples and seven were home runs. He had more extra base hits than he did singles.

Mize's hitting philosophy is simple. It consists of meeting the ball "when it's in there." Unlike so many

hitters, Johnny refuses to go after bad balls. "Some days a pitcher will fool you, but if your eye is right and your timing good, a fellow is bound to get hits."

From the beginning he carefully studied opposing pitchers. He noted their best pitches, the situations in which they were most likely to throw him a certain type of pitch. He noted their weak points, their strong points and tried to overcome his own well-known weaknesses.

In a game in Boston during the 1936 season Mize came up in the seventh inning with men on second and third and none out. He had a chance to win the game, yet Boston pitcher Jim Chaplin got him to pop up on a change of pace. Mize's reaction was typical. He said he hoped pitchers would keep on throwing him the change of pace.

Contributing to Mize's remarkable hitting ability is a deep and unshaken faith in himself. Without bravado, he maintains his ability to hit any pitcher in the league—and there are no exceptions. "Some days," he says, "you hit the greatest pitching in the league. Some days soft pitching makes you look bad. You have to match your mood with the pitching and the park and the weather and the breaks."

Mize finished the 1936 season, his first in the majors, with a .329 average, nineteen home runs and ninety-three runs driven in. Playing in 126 games, he divided his activity for the last time between first base and the outfield. His success was such that at the end of the season the Cardinals sent veteran first-sacker

"Rip" Collins to the Chicago Cubs for pitcher Lon Warneke.

The following season Mize really blossomed as a hitter. Married on August 8, 1937 to Jene Adams, he went on to finish the season with a .364 average that was second only to teammate "Ducky" Medwick<sup>1</sup>. One of his prized possessions that year was a picture of Babe Ruth, a cousin by marriage, bearing the inscription "I hope you try to break this record" (the 60 home runs Ruth hit in 1927).

Mize prepared for the 1937 season by doing plenty of running in the hills surrounding his Demorest home. He cut wood, drew water, did a lot of hunting. He got in some basketball and found time to help his brother run a filling station.

He continued to have good year after good year. Repeating as National League batting runner-up in 1938, this time to Ernie Lombardi, Mize hit .337. Lombardi's mark was .342. He hit three home runs in one game against the Braves. The following week, against the New York Giants, he hit two his first two times at bat. Johnny knew that if he hit another home run he would set a record for three hit in one game two times in the same season. The best he could do, however, was to fly out his third time up. Not till the bottom half of the eighth inning did he hit the record-breaking home run.

In 1939 Johnny led the league with a total-base per-

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Sixth Series.

centage of .626. This time he led the league in hitting, his .349 topping the field. In 153 games, he hit for a total of 353 bases in 564 at-bats. He drove in 108 runs, received ninety-two bases on balls and struck out but forty-nine times. He was also home-run leader with twenty-eight, hitting one against the Chicago Cubs on the last day of the season to break a tie with Mel Ott of the Giants. For the second year in a row, he had the highest total bases. In 1938 he had led National League sluggers with 326 total bases and a high .614 average.

After another fine year in 1940 in which he led the league in runs-batted in with 137 and hit .314, including a record forty-three home runs, Mize's base-hit production in 1941 fell off to sixteen homers, an even hundred runs driven in and a .317 average. He injured his shoulder rather severely while running bases and his absence from the lineup during the closing weeks of the close pennant race was a contributing factor to the Cardinals' losing out to the Dodgers.

Interesting corollary to Mize's on-the-field disposition is furnished by an isolated incident which took place at Braves Field during the 1940 season. Despite his acquaintance with the Cardinal "Gas House" teams of the early thirties, Mize never was anything but a gentleman both on and off the field. On the particular occasion at hand, Mize and his Cardinal teammates were holding pre-game infield practice when a wildly

thrown ball caromed into the practically empty stands and after rolling round a bit, came to rest at the feet of a little girl six or seven years old.

As she stepped into the aisle to retrieve the souvenir, she was shoved rudely aside by a burly male spectator who had decided to grab the ball for himself. There being few spectators and no ushers in the immediate vicinity, the occurrence went practically unnoticed.

Somehow, however, Johnny Mize had observed the episode. Without saying a word to anyone, he interrupted what he was doing to pick a new baseball from the Cardinal equipment bag. Then he stepped over to the stands where the incident had occurred and handed the shiny souvenir to the grateful and no-longer tearful youngster. Then, just as unobtrusively, he picked up his glove and went back to work.

During the winter of 1941-2 he was traded to the New York Giants for pitcher Bill Lohrman, catcher Ken O'Dea, first baseman Johnny McCarthy and a sum believed to be approximately \$50,000.

Although the deal was widely criticized, there were those who felt Sam Breadon and Branch Rickey were at least partially influenced by the shoulder injury he had suffered in their decision to sell Mize. Various times during that winter Mize was examined by doctors, several of whom strongly advised an operation on the ailing arm. This time, however, the big fellow decided to wait until he had an opportunity of testing the arm in spring training.

Less than a week after he reported to the Giant camp

in Miami, it appeared as though the New York club had made a "bad" deal. The shoulder pained Johnny so severely he was unable to throw a ball with any degree of force or accuracy. Mize would apparently have to submit to the operation, after all. But before going to the hospital, Johnny went to see an osteopath. The man, Doc Ferguson, had formerly been a pitcher with the Giants. His examination showed Mize's trouble stemmed from the shoulder joint. Accordingly, he adjusted the joint, then taped it tightly for a few days.

The first time Johnny tried his arm the trouble returned. Ferguson merely re-taped the shoulder and told him to give it complete rest for perhaps a week. When he tried it again, a bit cautiously, the arm held. Johnny threw again, harder. Still no pain. Within two weeks he was firing the ball with his customary vigor.

Mize went on to lead the league in runs-batted-in that year with 110, it being the sixth consecutive year he topped the hundred mark. He batted .305 and hammered twenty-six home runs. Apparently the all-too-risky trade was going to pay off for the Giants. However, before another season rolled around, Mize found himself in the armed forces of the United States. He entered the U.S. Navy in March of 1943 and served thirty-one months. After reporting to the Great Lakes Training Camp, he eventually found himself assigned to duty in the Pacific.

During the war years he managed to get in a little service ball. He did his best to keep himself in shape,



playing badminton during mess hour to keep his weight down. When he reported to the Giants' spring training camp in 1946 he was in the best shape of his career and, by all indications, headed for perhaps his greatest year in the majors.

Picking up a major league-career at the age of thirty-three, particularly after three years away from the game, was at best a difficult task. But Johnny Mize gave it everything he had. Home runs boomed off his bat as of yore and his batting average stayed well above the magic .300 mark. But early in August, the injury jinx that had plagued him before struck him a double blow. In an exhibition game he was hit on the wrist by a pitch which fractured the bone. Out of the lineup for a month, Mize no sooner returned to action than he was out again, this time for the remainder of the season. Chasing a foul ball, he smashed into a box railing and broke a toe.

Playing in 101 games that year, Mize hit .337, drove in seventy runs and hit twenty-two homers, one shy of the league-leading twenty-three collected by Pittsburgh's Ralph Kiner.

Serious, methodical as ever, Mize reported to spring training in 1947 bent on making up for past disappointments by having the best year of his career. True to his prescribed personal training ritual, the big fellow started out with his customary forty-ounce bat. Through years of observation he had discovered that early in the spring his timing wasn't what it would be later on. Consequently, it wasn't unusual for him

to hit many balls well up on his bat handle. Through studious experimentation, he also learned that a heavy bat would absorb the shock to his hands of handle hits a whole lot better than the thirty-six-inch, thirty-six-ounce bat he used once the season got under way.

By the opening of the 1947 season, the big fellow was raring to go. Although a self-styled poor spring hitter, one who didn't reach his stride for perhaps six weeks, Mize started out like a house afire. During the first month of the season he hit ten home runs. On April 24 he hit three in one game off Boston's Johnny Sain, the fifth time he had turned the trick. He rocked Boston's ace moundsman for home runs in the third, sixth and eighth innings.

By June he had hit twenty, and was beginning to attract attention on the nation's sports pages. Comparisons were made between the home-run pace he was setting and the one maintained by Babe Ruth in 1927 when he hit his record sixty. But Johnny refused to become excited. He went along from day to day doing his best—which proved to be a one-man wrecking job on rival National League pitching staffs.

His Giant teammates began to catch the home-run fever from him. Walker Cooper,<sup>2</sup> Willard Marshall, rookie Bobby Thompson and even little Bill Rigney began matching his power blows. With seventeen home runs in April and twenty-four in May, the Giant sluggers really went to work in June, blasting forty-four to raise their total to eighty-five.

<sup>2</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Ninth Series.

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In July they hit fifty-five, raising the total to 140, just thirty-one shy of the National League record set by the Chicago Cubs in 1930. During one stretch of sixteen games, Giant hitters blasted thirty-seven home runs. By now the entire club was openly gunning for the record. Each time a player connected for the circuit, he was welcomed back by a yelling bench. Mize personally tied the record on August 24. Somehow it was fitting that he do it against the Cubs themselves. In the second game of a double header that day, he caught one of Hank Wyse's pitches and drove it into the stands. Hardly had the crowd settled back than Ernie Lombardi followed with number 172 and Buddy Kerr with 173. The Giants were close to the New York Yankees' "Murderers' Row" record of 182 set in 1936.

With Mize and Willard Marshall leading the way, the record was tied, then exceeded. Jack Lohrke was the player to break the former mark. He hit Giant homer 183 off Boston's Red Barrett. Before the season was over, the Polo Grounds wrecking crew had amassed a total of 221 homers. Mize, tied for the league lead with Ralph Kiner, set the pace with fifty-one. Outfielder Willard Marshall hit thirty-six and catcher Walker Cooper thirty-five. Bobby Thompson, playing his first full year in the majors, had twenty-nine and Bill Rigney seventeen. The National League mark that had stood for seventeen years had been exceeded by fifty and the major-league record surpassed by thirty-nine.

Partial recognition of Mize's achievement that year came when he was picked as "Player of the Year" by the New York chapter of the Baseball Writers of America.

Nicknamed "The Big Cat" because of the cat-like grace and smoothness of his batting stance, Mize has never been celebrated for his speed afoot. During the 1947 season, however, the Giants made use of his known slowness to bait a neat trap for speedy Jackie Robinson of the Brooklyn Dodgers. The first time the Giants met Robinson he ran them dizzy. He stole bases, ran and scored like a whirlwind. He took reckless chances and, because of his dazzling speed, got away with them. However, the next time the Giants were ready for him.

On this occasion, Robinson doubled to left center and both shortstop Buddy Kerr and second baseman Bill Rigney mistakenly went onto the grass to handle the relay. Seeing second base apparently unguarded, the fleet Robinson turned the corner and lit out for third. This is what the Giants had been counting on—the reason Rigney and Kerr had apparently committed the unpardonable blunder of straying off second. Unnoticed by Robinson, big Johnny Mize had trailed him all the way down from first base. Kerr's relay to Mize at second easily tapped the surprised Brooklyn runner.

That's the way Mize is. Always trying, always learning. He has long profited both from his own mistakes and those of others. When rivals began pitching him

outside in an attempt to curb his extra base power, Johnny learned to hit the outside balls to left field. There was one day when he drove three successive Cincinnati pitchers to cover with consecutive doubles, all to left, on outside pitches. Nevertheless, opposing moundsmen recorded some slight progress in their efforts to check Mize. In 1948, for the first time since 1930, they held his batting average under .300. That year the "Big Cat" hit .289 and drove in 125 runs. However, he had his revenge. For the second time in as many years he and Ralph Kiner tied for league leadership in home runs, this time with forty. Johnny's total of ninety-one over a two-year span became another of the many records the big fellow has established in his long and spectacular professional career.

NOTE: On August 22, 1949, Johnny Mize changed uniforms and leagues when he was sold to the New York Yankees.

# JOHNNY MIZE

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## JOHN ROBERT MIZE

Born, Demorest, Georgia, January 7, 1913.

Bats left. Throws right. Height, 6' 2". Weight, 205 pounds.

Year	Club	League	Pos.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SO	Avg.	PO	A	E	PA
1930	Greensboro	P.L.	of	12	31	5	6	3	0	0	2	0	.194	10	0	1	.909
1931	Greensboro	P.L.	of	94	341	69	115	27	1	9	64	6	.337	130	17	9	.942
1932	Elmira	N.Y.P.L.	1b-of	106	405	60	132	20	11	8	78	3	.326	402	20	6	.986
1933	Greensboro	P.L.	1b	98	378	108	136	29	10	22	104	3	.360	860	51	25	.973
1933	Rochester	I.L.	1b	42	159	27	56	11	3	8	32	1	.352	355	33	5	.987
1934	Rochester	I.L.	1b	90	313	49	106	16	1	17	66	0	.339	694	72	9	.988
1935	Rochester	I.L.	1b	65	252	37	80	11	1	12	44	1	.317	547	41	8	.987
1936	St. Louis	N.L.	1b-of	126	414	76	136	30	8	19	93	1	.329	909	67	6	.994
1937	St. Louis	N.L.	1b	145	560	103	204	40	7	25	113	2	.364	1308	67	17	.988
1938	St. Louis	N.L.	1b	149	531	85	179	34	16*	27	102	0	.337	1297	93	15	.989
1939	St. Louis	N.L.	1b	153	564	104	197	44	14	28*	108	0	.349*	1348	90	19	.987
1940	St. Louis	N.L.	1b	155	579	111	182	31	13	43*	137*	7	.314	1376	79	14	.990
1941	St. Louis*	N.L.	1b	126	473	67	150	39*	8	16	100	4	.317	1157	82	8	.994
1942	New York	N.L.	1b	142	541	97	165	25	7	26	110*	3	.305	1393	74	8	.995
1943, 1944, 1945	(In United States Navy)																
1946	New York	N.L.	1b	101	377	70	127	18	3	22	70	3	.337	928	83	11	.989
1947	New York	N.L.	1b	154	586	137*	177	26	2	51*	138*	2	.302	1381	118	6	.996
1948	New York	N.L.	1b	152	560	110	162	26	4	40*	125	4	.289	1359	111	13	.991

## COMPLETE MAJOR LEAGUE TOTALS

10 years

1403 5185 960 1679 313 82 297 1096 26 .324 12,456 864 117 .991

\* Traded to New York December 11, for pitcher Bill Lohrman, catcher Kan O'Dean, first baseman Johnny McCarthy and cash.

\* Indicates led league or was tied for league leadership.

			ALL STAR TOTALS												
			4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	.000	7	0	0	1.000
1937	NL	1b	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	0	0	0	.000
1939	NL	ph	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	8	0	0	1.000
1940	NL	1b	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	.250	5	0	0	1.000
1941	NL	1b	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	3	0	0	1.000
1942	NL	1b	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	7	0	0	1.000
1946	NL	1b	3	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	.667	8	0	0	1.000
1947	NL	1b	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	.250	4	1	0	1.000
1948	NL	1b													
			21	2	4	1	0	1	2		.190	42	1	0	1.000

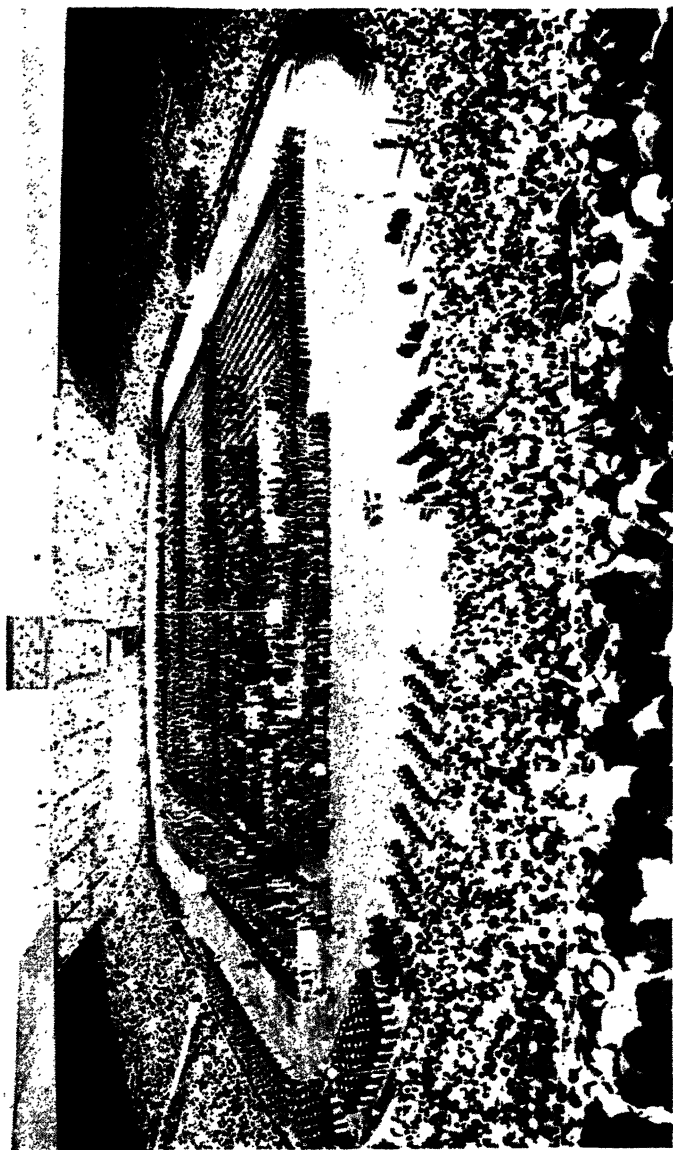
Outstanding performances: established 3 records Sept. 8, 1940 by hitting 3 successive home runs in first game with Pitt., making 4th time he had hit 3 home runs in 1 game and 2nd time he had achieved feat twice in one season—May 13, 1940 hit 3 in 14 inning game; July 13, 1938 hit three and hit 3 more July 20, 1938; hit 3 April 24, 1947 breaking own rec. of four; tied Chuck Klein's rec (NL) for left-handed batters with 43 home runs and broke Hornsby's St. Louis Cardinals mark of 42 in 1940; tied for home run lead in 1947 and set rec. for left-handed home runs, breaking own mark (1940) and Chuck Klein's 1929 mark; made four long hits July 3, 1939; set NL rec. for scoring in 16 consec. games—tallied 22 times from April 24 to May 6, 1947 (inc.); set NL rec. for three years 40 or more home runs; played 61 games without an error, being stopped in a night game in Boston, July 25, 1941; led NL in batting, 1939; led NL in runs scored in 1947; led NL in triples, 1938; in home runs 1939-40 and tied in 1947-8; led NL in rbi 1940-42-47. Led NL firstbasemen in fielding, 1942-47; led in po. 1947-8; tied for lead in errors, 1938-9; led in double plays, 1948. Broke New York home run record of 42 established by Mel Ott, 1929; led NL in total bases, 1938-40; in slugging pct., 1938-40, 1942; tied for lead in doubles, 1941.

THE 1948 OLYMPICS

*“Fifty-nine Nations in Championship  
Competition”*







OPENING DAY OLYMPIC GAMES CEREMONIES AT WEMBLEY STADIUM, ENGLAND



## CHAPTER XII

### THE 1948 OLYMPICS

#### "FIFTY-NINE NATIONS IN CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITION"

THE year 1948 saw a major share of the sporting world's attention focused on the continent of Europe. That was an Olympic year, and between February, when the Winter Games were held at St. Moritz, and the summer months, when the bulk of the Games was being run off in England, representatives of fifty-nine different nations jumped, ran, fenced, rowed and competed against each other in a variety of events that ranged from track and field to yachting and gymnastics.

As was expected the United States made off with a major share of the gold medals. Results of a purely unofficial tabulation (based on a seven for first place, five for second, four for third, three for fourth, two for fifth and one for sixth-place finish) gave the United States 547.5 points compared with 308.5 for runner-up Sweden. France finished third with 206, Hungary fourth with 183.1 and Italy was fifth with 166.

Although seventeen nations failed to tally so much as a single point, several erstwhile "orphans" got into the Olympic scoring act. Belgium's Gaston Reiff set an Olympic mark of 14:17.6 in the 5,000-meter run;

Argentina was a surprise winner in the marathon event, placing three men in the first ten finishers; India won the hockey competition; Turkey prevailed in wrestling; and England did better than expected in rowing, boxing, cycling and yachting.

Of America's winning 547.5 points, 179 came in the track and field events and 154 in men's and women's swimming. Sweden showed strength in track and field and in wrestling while the major share of France's total was earned in the various fencing events.

As in past Olympic competition, individual names stood out, among them the marvelous Dutch housewife and track star, Mrs. Fanny Blankers-Koen; American diver Vicki Draves, only woman to win two diving gold medals; Czech runner Emil Zatopek; American track heroes Harrison Dillard, Bob Mathias, and Mel Patton; Hungarian hammer-thrower Irmay Nemeth; and swimmers Wally Ris, Jimmy McLane, Joe Verdeur, Ann Curtis, all of the United States and Karen Harup of Denmark.

There was the customary wrangling and bickering attending the Games, enlivened this time by a lively battle between opposing American ice-hockey factions that for a time threatened the existence of the Olympics. The controversy, between Avery Brundage's AAU and the militant AHA wound up with two American hockey teams in Switzerland ready to represent the United States—the AHA team, International Ice Hockey League members, yet not recognized by the

U.S. Olympic Committee and the AAU team, carrying U.S. Olympic sanction but little else.

After weeks of wrangling, threats and counter-threats, the Winter Games were allowed to proceed as scheduled with the AHA players representing the United States.

Unfortunately for competitors and spectators, the weather at St. Moritz refused to coöperate. Snow and ice conditions varied from day to day with the skiers often competing in heavy snow and fog while the skaters and hockey players went through their maneuvers with at times, wretched ice conditions.

As expected, Scandinavian nations dominated the Winter phase of the Olympic Games. Sweden prevailed in the "snow" competition and Norway held sway over the "ice" events. Norway swept the ski-jumping competition with all first three places. Birger Ruud,<sup>1</sup> 1932 Olympic champion at Lake Placid, was a key contributor to the Norwegian team triumph.

Notable American triumph was achieved by eighteen-year-old Dick Button who won the men's figure-skating competition. Barbara Ann Scott, diminutive Canadian star, scored an equally startling triumph in the women's competition, thus giving North America two valuable first places.

The AHA team which represented the United States in the hockey tournament finished fourth among nine competing teams. Canada and Czechoslovakia finished

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Fifth Series.

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with identical 7-1 records and Switzerland was third. The American team won five games, lost three, scored eighty-six goals and allowed thirty-two.

Unofficial results of the Winter Games found Sweden prevailing over runner-up Switzerland, seventy points to sixty-eight. The United States finished third, just  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a point behind the Swiss. Then came Norway, Austria and Finland.

Gretchen Frazer gave the United States its lone skiing victory when she came home first in the woman's slalom event. She finished second in the alpine combination (downhill and slalom).

The Winter Games bowed out of St. Moritz on February 8, bringing a welcome respite of several months until the summer, and major portion of the competition was held.

War-ravaged England proved herself a magnificent host to the 815 athletes from fifty-three different nations who came to the island for the thirty-three track and field events of the Games. Despite a shortage of food and building commodities, adequate accommodations for competitors were fashioned out of former army camps and depots. Track competition was held in the vast oval of Wembley Stadium with the United States team quartered at nearby Uxbridge.

The summer phase of the Olympics was opened with fitting ceremonies on July 17 in the stadium in Athens where, for 1,000 years the Ancient Greek Games had been held. A Greek maiden kindled the Olympic flame which was borne on foot by relays some 2,000

miles to England. Twelve days later, before a crowd of 80,000 spectators and the massed teams of the competing nations, a British runner carried the torch into Wembley Stadium. In a moment he had kindled the sacred flame which burned throughout the remainder of the competition.

Of the thirty-three track and field events, the United States won twelve, Sweden five, the Netherlands four, France and Hungary two, and Finland, Australia, Jamaica, Italy, Argentina, Belgium, Austria and Czechoslovakia one each. Thirteen countries provided Olympic champions, representing the greatest number of countries that have scored in the Games.

Notably absent from the competition in this, as in all 1948 Olympic events, were the Japanese and Germans. Although still retaining their membership in the international Olympic organization, these former Axis powers were denied the privilege of competing in the world's carnival of sport. Also absent, of course were the Russians but in their case their failure to participate was one of their own choosing.

United States supremacy made itself felt from the opening day of the track competition when Roy Cochran, world record holder for the 440-yard hurdles, clicked off 53.9 to win his heat without effort. Barney Ewell and Harrison Dillard saw action in the sprint heats as did Mel Patton, eventual winner of the 200-meter dash.

Highlight of the first day's competition came in the gruelling 10,000-meter run in which Czech Emil Zato-



pek literally ran world record-holder Heino into the ground. Heino led from the outset of the race and at the end of eight laps was well out in front. Then, in the tenth lap, the grimacing Zatopek moved up to challenge. Five laps later he unleashed a typical spurt that killed off Heino for good, the Finn dropping out of the race.

Whether he realized his chief competition was gone or not, Zatopek continued to run himself to the point of exhaustion. Weaving from side to side and with his mouth gasping for air in his unorthodox running style, the Czech Army athlete kept biting deeper and deeper into record time. With the huge crowd on its feet urging him on, Zatopek unfurled an astonishing 66.6 last lap to beat Heino's old world record by almost 12 full seconds.

Unseasonable heat and the 100-meter dash finals combined with Roy Cochran's 400-meter hurdles win (in record time of 51.1) to tell the story of the second day. Harrison Dillard and Barney Ewell ran one-two in the 100-meter dash finals to add to the growing United States point total.

While tallies of the day's results omit any reference to post-competitive doings, the 100-meter dash finals furnished one of the most unusual and heart-wrenching stories of the Games. It will be recalled that Harrison Dillard, American hurdling champion from Baldwin-Wallace had unaccountably failed to qualify for the United States Olympic team. Failed, that is, as a hurdler. Many felt that Dillard was overtrained. What-

ever the reason, the man who had demonstrated time and again that he was this country's, if not the world's finest sprint hurdler, was unable to qualify in his specialty at the American Olympic trials.

Great competitor that he is, Dillard refused to be disheartened by his failure. Fiercely proud of his record and anxious to represent his country at the Olympics, Dillard went out and earned himself a place as a sprinter on the United States Olympic team.

Dillard, Ewell and Patton, the American sprinters, breezed through their respective heats at London and when the finals were called in Wembley Stadium, the three crouched at the starting line with Panama's Lloyd LaBeach; Alan McCorquodale and E. McDonald Bailey of Great Britain. The draw for lanes found Dillard in lane one, closest to the grandstand surrounding the track. Four lanes away was Ewell, bracketed by LaBeach and Patton, the men who had turned in the fastest trial clockings and the men figured to run one-two in the finals.

Somehow the aging Ewell beat them—beat Patton and LaBeach, and when he crossed the finish line his face split into an ear-to-ear grin and he flung himself into a victory jig. Not till the official announcement came did Ewell realize that he had been beaten by the slightest of margins by teammate Dillard who had run far out of Ewell's vision. At the finish, the cheers of the great crowd were as much for the disappointed Ewell gamely congratulating the winner as they were for Harrison Dillard.

The weather turned bad for the third day of the track and field competition; however, another capacity crowd was on hand. The running of Herb McKenley<sup>2</sup> in the 200-meter dash preliminary heats thrilled the crowd as did the magnificent stretch duel in the 5,000 meters run between Gaston Reiff and Emil Zatopek. Three Finns, three Swedes, two Belgians and one each from Czechoslovakia, Norway, the Netherlands and the United States comprised the starting field in the final.

The race was run in a downpour and as the runners reached the halfway point, the battle for position had resolved itself to a three-way struggle between Slijkhuis of the Netherlands, Zatopek of Czechoslovakia and Reiff of Belgium. Three laps from home Reiff spurted unexpectedly, catching the favorite, Zatopek, off guard and as they entered the bell lap he enjoyed a twenty-yard lead over Slijkhuis with perhaps an even greater margin over Zatopek. Although apparently out of the race, Zatopek began an astonishing sprint that quickly pulled him even with Slijkhuis. Then, with the increasing roar of the crowd in his ears, he set out after Reiff. He came mighty close to catching him. As they crossed the finish line there was a bare yard between the two runners. Slijkhuis finished third, some nine seconds behind and then came Ahlden of Sweden.

Finals of the 800-meter run saw an unfortunate incident occur when Parlett of Great Britain, running in the outside lane of the crowded nine-man field, was badly bumped in the scramble for position at the first turn and never did recover the ground he thus lost.

<sup>2</sup>See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Tenth Series.

After a relatively slow first half, the pace quickened and with Whitfield of the United States leading, the runners entered the final lap. The order of finish found the American finishing three yards ahead of Arthur Wint of Jamaica. Marcel Hansenne of France was third. Both Whitfield and Wint bettered the Olympic record set in 1932 by T. Hampson of Great Britain. Whitfield's time, a new mark, was 1:49.2.

Two Americans featured the fourth day's competition at Wembley Stadium. Mel Patton, the excellent sprinter from the University of Southern California, atoned for his failure in the 100-meter dash by winning the 200-meter event from teammate Barney Ewell and Lloyd LaBeach. Both Patton and Ewell turned in identical clockings of 21.1.

The second American to join the day's group of winners was shot-putter Wilbur Thompson. Although America's leading shot-putter, Charles Fonville of Michigan, had to be left behind with a strained back, the United States entry of Thompson, Delaney and Fuchs finished 1-2-3, far ahead of the representatives from the other nations. Thompson's 56-foot-2-inch effort erased the former Olympic mark of German Hans Woellke by more than three feet.

Hurdler Bill Porter continued the American sweep the fifth day with a 110-meter hurdles win in the record time of 13.9. Clyde Scott, former Navy and Arkansas football player, and Craig Dixon of the University of California at Los Angeles finished second and third.

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The victory of Arthur Wint over his fellow Jamaican Herb McKenley shared the center of attraction with the first of the decathlon events on the sixth day's program. Mal Whitfield, the 800-meter winner, ran third behind the two Jamaicans.

Bob Mathias, the seventeen-year-old Tulare, California schoolboy trailed Kistenmacher of Argentina and Heinrich of France at the end of the first day's five decathlon events. The following day in the seventh event, the discus, he took the lead from his older, more experienced opponents and won in what observers hailed as perhaps the outstanding single achievement of the Games.

The United States was completely shut out of the 1500-meter finals, also run on the seventh day of the track and field competition. Eriksson of Sweden was the winner here with his fellow countryman Lennart Strand second and Slijkhuis of the Netherlands third. Gehrman, the first American to finish, was not among the first six runners.

The 10,000-meter walk, the marathon and the women's high-jump finals ended the last day's competition. Thousands of spectators remained to cheer American Alice Coachman's victory in the high jump over Mrs. Tyler of Great Britain, who, even though she bettered the previous Olympic mark, did not win her event. Miss Coachman's winning jump was 5' 61 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".

Other American point winners in the men's track and field events were Willie Steele's first place in the

broad jump, Bennett and Felton's three-four finish in the sixteen-pound weight throw, Guinn Smith's win in the pole vault (in which Bob Richards finished third), George Stanich's third in the high jump and Dike Eddleman's fourth, Fortune Gordien's third in the discus, and the 400- and 1600-meter relay victories of Dillard, Ewell, Patton and Wright and Cochran, Bourland, Harmden and Whitfield. Results of the four-man 100-meter relay were held up and the United States team at first disqualified because of an allegedly faulty baton pass between Ewell and Wright; however, subsequent official films sustained the American triumph and the men received their gold medals.

A brief look at the women's track and field competition shows that in the six events in which Olympic records were already recognized, three new marks were created—in the javelin, the just-mentioned high jump and the 80-meter hurdles. Here, as previously noted, Mrs. Fanny Blankers-Koen almost completely dominated the competition. The Dutch housewife won the 100-meter dash, the 200-meter dash, the 80-meter hurdles, and ran a leg on the victorious Netherlands 100-meter relay team.

American points were gained on A. Patterson's third in the 200-meter dash, Alice Coachman's win in the high jump and D. Dodson's fourth in the javelin.

It was in the swimming competition that the United States gained its most notable—and unexpected—success. Eight first places were registered by American swimmers. The competition was held in Empire

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Pool, Wembley, from July 30 to August 7. Not a day passed but what Olympic records were established, with marks frequently going by the boards in both heats and semifinals, as well as event finals. In the finals of the women's 100-meter free-style relay, five teams from the United States, Denmark, the Netherlands, Great Britain and Sweden all beat the Olympic record of 4:36 set in 1936 by the Netherlands. The Swedish team was later disqualified in the Wembley Pool final.

Pre-Olympic estimates had figured the United States almost certain of winning four events—the 1500-meter free style, the 100-meter backstroke, the 200-meter breast stroke and the 200-meter free-style relay. Yet when the competition was over, America had won the 100-meter free style, the 400-meter free style, the 1500-meter free style, the 200-meter breast stroke, the 100-meter backstroke and the 200-meter relay. Wally Ris set an Olympic record of 57.3 in the 100-meter free style as did W. Smith with 4:41 in the 400-meter free style. Jimmy McLane won the 1500-meter event, but did not come close to the record held by K. Kitamura of Japan. Forbes Norris, the Harvard swimmer, was sixth. Joe Verdeur set another Olympic mark when he did 2:39.3 in the 200-meter breast stroke and Alan Stack was a close winner over teammate R. Cowell in the 100-meter backstroke.

As had been expected, the United States completely dominated the diving competition. Sammy Lee and Bruce Harlan finished one-two in the men's high div-

ing and Vicki Draves won both women's events—the high diving and springboard. Harlan, M. Anderson and Sammy Lee gave America a clean sweep in the men's springboard competition.

Greta Andersen of Denmark, teammate Karen Harup and Ann Curtis of the United States were the important winners in the women's swimming. Miss Curtis won the 400-meter free style, finished second in the 100-meter free style and swam a leg on the victorious 100-meter relay team. Miss Andersen triumphed in the 100-meter free style and swam on the runner-up 100-meter relay team and Miss Harup won the 100-meter backstroke, finished second in the 400-meter free style, fourth in the 100-meter free style and swam a leg on the Danish 100-meter relay team. Olympic record times were turned in by Miss Curtis in the 400-meter freestyle (5:17.8), Nel Van Vliet in the 200-meter breast stroke (2:57), Karen Harup, with 1:14.4 in the 100-meter backstroke, and by the American 400-meter relay team of M. L. Corridon, T. M. Kalama, Brenda Helser and Ann Curtis with 4:29.2.

America didn't fare too well in the wrestling, coming up with but two first-place winners—New York detective Henry Wittenberg in the light heavyweight class and G. Brand in the middleweight division. The wrestling competition was held in Empress Hall, Earl's Court.

American weight-lifters fared perhaps better than expected. J. N. De Pietro won the bantamweight



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division with R. W. S. Tom third. J. B. Terpak was fourth in the lightweight class and F. Spellman and P. George finished 1-2 in the middleweight competition. Clearest superiority was seen in the heavier classes where S. Stanczyk and H. Sakata finished 1-2 in the light heavyweight field and J. Davis and N. Schemansky did the same in the heavyweight division.

Fencing, which took place at the Palace of Engineering, Wembley, was left almost entirely to the domination of the European countries, France, Italy and Hungary. France won the individual and team foil, Italy the individual men's épée and France the team épée and Hungary the individual and team saber.

The United States finished seventh in a field of sixteen in the men's team gymnastic competition.

Rowing events were held at Henley-on-Thames and here the United States fared a bit better. As expected, the United States representative, the University of California eight-oared crew, won its event. An Australian, M. Wood, won the single sculls and Great Britain's R. D. Burnell and B. H. Bushnell took first in the double sculls. Great Britain repeated in the coxswainless pairs, Italy won the coxswainless fours, and America the coxed fours. United States team members were W. D. Westlund, R. D. Martin, R. I. Will, G. S. Giovanelli, and A. J. Morgan, cox.

Canoeing saw Sweden win the kayak singles in both the 1,000- and 10,000-meter races and the kayak pairs. Czechoslovakia won the Canadian 1,000-meter singles, and Canadian 10,000-meter singles and the United

States finished first in the 10,000-meter Canadian pairs.

Yachting, at Torbay, South Devon, saw the United States representatives collect sufficient points for a strong second place in the standings behind winner Denmark.

Americans showed to advantage in the equestrian competition which was held at Wembley Stadium and the Aldershot area. First Lieutenant R. J. Borg finished fourth in the individual dressage, Col. E. F. Thomson seventh in the three-day dressage, Lt. Col. C. Anderson and Lt. Col. F. Henry 1-2 in the endurance, speed and cross-country test and Col. F. Wing fourth in the Prix des Nations jumping competition. The modern pentathlon was won by Capt. W. O. Grut of Sweden with Major G. B. Moore of the United States second.

Although not too popular, mainly because of the vast physical advantage they enjoyed over their competitors, the United States team breezed through the basketball tournament. Composed mainly of members of the Phillips Oilers, 1948 AAU winners and the University of Kentucky collegiate champions, the American victory march was practically unopposed. Twenty-three teams competed in the tournament which was held in Harringay Arena and scores of games in which the Americans took part indicate their margin of superiority. In the preliminary round they defeated Switzerland, 86-21. In the quarter-finals they eliminated Uruguay, 63-28 and in the semi-finals

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they topped Mexico, 71-40. In the finals it was France which fell before them 65-21.

Space does not permit a discussion of the shooting, cycling, boxing, football or water polo events. America was shut out of cycling, football and water polo and managed to pick up 15 points in the shooting and 8 in the boxing events.

United States winners and non-point winners bore their country's honor and athletic standards well during the Games and more than merited their fellow countrymen's pride and gratitude. The world's greatest carnival of amateur sport came to an end with fitting ceremonies on August 14. As 80,000 spectators looked on in Wembley Stadium, the Olympic flag was slowly lowered by two scarlet-clad British guardsmen. A mixed choir solemnly chanted the final measures of the Olympic hymn and with the extinguishing of the flame that had burned during the course of the Games, the fourteenth Olympiad passed into history.

### 1948 OLYMPIC RECORD HOLDERS

#### MEN'S TRACK

100-meter dash, Harrison Dillard, U.S., 10.3 sec. (equals Olympic record)

400-meter run, Arthur Wint, Jamaica, 46.2 sec. (equals Olympic record)

5,000-meter run, Gaston Reiff, Belgium, 14:17.6 (new Olympic record)

10,000-meter run, Emil Zatopek, Czechoslovakia, 29:59.6 (new Olympic record)

10,000-meter walk, J. F. Mikaelsson, Sweden, 45:13.2 (new Olympic record)

110-meter hurdles, William Porter, U.S., 13.9 (new Olympic record)

400-meter hurdles, Roy Cochran, U.S., 51.1 (new Olympic record)

discus, Adolfo Consolini, Italy, 173' 2" (new Olympic record)

#### WOMEN'S TRACK

200-meter dash, Fanny Blankers-Koen, Holland, 24.4 (Olympic record, first time held in Olympics)

80-meter hurdles, Fanny Blankers-Koen, Holland, 11.2 (world and Olympic record)

high jump, Alice Coachman, U.S., 5' 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (Olympic record)

broad jump, V. O. Gyarmati, Hungary, 18' 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ " (Olympic record, first time held in Olympics)

javelin, H. Baume, Austria, 149' 6" (Olympic record)

shot put, Micheline Ostermeyer, France, 45' 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (Olympic record, first time held in Olympics)

#### MEN'S SWIMMING

100-meter free style, Walter Ris, U.S., 57.3 (Olympic record)

400-meter free style, Bill Smith, U.S., 4:41 (Olympic record)

200-meter breast stroke, Joe Verdeur, U.S., 2:39.3 (Olympic record)

800-meter relay, U.S., 8:46 (world and Olympic record) Ris, Wolff, McLane, Smith

#### WOMEN'S SWIMMING

100-meter free style, Greta Andersen, Denmark, 65.8 (tied Olympic record)

400-meter free style, Ann Curtis, U.S., 5:17.8 (Olympic record)

100-meter back stroke, Karen Harup, Denmark, 1:14.4 (Olympic record)

200-meter breast stroke, Nel Van Vliet, Holland, 2:57 (Olympic record)

400-meter relay, U.S., 4:29.2 (Olympic record) Corridon, Helser, Kalma and Curtis

#### WEIGHT LIFTING

featherweight, I. Fayad, Egypt, 732 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds (world and Olympic record)

bantamweight, Joe De Pietro, U.S., 677 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds (Olympic record) first time held in Olympics

lightweight, I. Shams, Egypt, 793 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds (Olympic record)

middleweight, Frank Spellman, U.S., 859 pounds (Olympic record)

light heavyweight, Stan Stanczyk, U.S., 919 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds (Olympic record)

heavyweight, John Davis, U.S., 999 $\frac{1}{2}$  pounds (world and Olympic record)



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**JACK ROOSEVELT (JACKIE) ROBINSON**

*“Brooklyn’s Star Second Baseman and Batter”*

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JACK ROOSEVELT (JACKIE) ROBINSON





## CHAPTER XIII

JACK ROOSEVELT (JACKIE) ROBINSON  
"BROOKLYN'S STAR SECOND BASEMAN AND BATTER"

ON A CERTAIN day in December 1947 a group of New Jersey youngsters went skating. For a time there was nothing unusual about their outing. Like thousands of nameless contemporaries they played hockey, held impromptu speed races and practiced that particular form of ice mayhem known as "cracking the whip." As the day wore on, the sky darkened and it grew increasingly cold. Their exertions insufficient to keep them comfortably warm, the self-reliant youngsters set about building themselves a fire.

Sticks and papers were quickly gathered and before long a modest fire was struggling to combat the bitter cold. Still the party remained totally indistinguishable from countless others taking place on ponds and lakes throughout the nation's winter belt. Then an impatient someone shouldered to the fringe of skaters kneeling huddled over the tiny flame and acted with remarkable quickness, albeit an equally remarkable lack of common sense. Seeking a means of increasing the meager warmth of the fire to a roaring blaze, he doused the licking flames with gasoline. So quickly did the ensuing conflagration leap up that one of the

nearest boys, Eddie Hamlin by name, was severely burned.

Taken to a hospital, the near fatally injured youth pleaded for a visit from his favorite baseball player—Jackie Robinson. Robinson and the Brooklyn Dodger management hastened to comply. But the Brooklyn club made one demand. The visit had to be held in complete secrecy. No bedside pictures or newspaper stories were to be permitted.

The reason was obvious. Negro Jackie Robinson, battling for acceptance as a National Leaguer by the fans and players of America, had to stand or fall on his baseball ability alone—not on his off-the-diamond generosity and good citizenship.

“Publicizing the visit would have been bad,” a Dodger executive later explained, “and against our carefully worked out policy on Jackie. We were determined that the public’s judgment of Robinson had to be arrived at by weighing what he did on the baseball diamond and in no other way.”

The amazing saga of this stellar all-around athlete, first Negro to break into major-league baseball in modern times, begins in the sun-baked hamlet of Cairo, deep in southern Georgia. Here on January 31, 1919, Jackie was born, the youngest child of Jerry and Mallie Robinson. There were three other boys and one girl. His mother named him after former President Theodore Roosevelt.

Before he was two years old, Jackie had lost his father. His courageous mother, hard put to support her brood

of five, moved her family three thousand miles across the continent to Pasadena, California. It was a momentous migration for the Robinsons as well as for American sports history.

Once settled in their new home, all the members of the family had to pitch in and work. Jackie shined shoes, collected old newspapers and scrap metal, even sold hot dogs at the Rose Bowl<sup>1</sup> and other big stadia. These workaday tasks all contributed toward the one great aim of Mrs. Robinson's life; namely, a good education for all her children.

"I had time to play, though," Jackie says with his widest smile. "Softball, baseball, running with the other kids in Pepper Street. That's where I began to be interested in games."

Jackie's mother, a Methodist, was deeply religious and brought her children up to believe in God. At first she was not enthusiastic about Jackie's playing, especially when it came on Sundays, but her boys gradually instilled in her a liking for sports.

Of Jackie's three brothers, Matthew was the outstanding athlete. He attended the University of Oregon, where he became a track star. There he made a world's record of 20.7 seconds in the 220-yard dash. It stood until May 25, 1935, when at Ann Arbor, Michigan, another Negro, Jesse Owens,<sup>2</sup> of Ohio State University, set the present world mark of 20.3 seconds. Matthew Robinson continued his running, and in 1936

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Sixth Series.

<sup>2</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Fifth Series.

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was a member of the U.S. Olympic track team at Berlin, Germany.

Meanwhile Jackie had entered the John Muir Technical High School at Pasadena. Here he became a four-sport star—football, basketball, track and baseball. Strangely enough, of the four it was baseball he liked the least. But that was long years and many heart-breaking miles before he put on the uniform of the Brooklyn Dodgers at a Southern training camp.

When Jackie graduated from high school, in February, 1937, he was undecided whether to continue his education or get a permanent job. Mrs. Robinson had no doubts. College it had to be. Jackie was willing. Although not keenly interested in his studies at high school he decided that he would like to get a degree in physical education. He wanted to be a coach, so that he could work with boys.

"I was even willing to study to do it!" he says.

Right there in his home city was the school for him—Pasadena Junior College. Matthew had studied there before going to Oregon. And Matthew had set a running-broad-jump record of twenty-five feet that still stood. You can guess what happened next. Jackie won a place on the track team, practiced the running broad jump, and presently bettered Matt's record by six and a half inches.

On the Pasadena basketball court, he once scored twenty-eight points in a single game, although he did not play the entire contest. On the diamond, he led

all junior college batters with the unheard-of average of .466.

One afternoon he took part in a meet with the track team, then drove forty miles in an old car to play in a game with the baseball nine the same day.

Junior colleges, of course, offer only a two-year program. Therefore in order to get a college degree Jackie had to transfer to some four-year school. He received an athletic scholarship to the University of California at Los Angeles. Since Los Angeles is only ten miles west of Pasadena, he did not have far to travel. In the fall of 1938, he enrolled at UCLA.

Those UCLA days were among the happiest of Jackie's career. Everyone idolized him. His athletic record there was phenomenal. His speed and ball-carrying skill made him the terror of all gridiron opponents. He could pass, carry the ball, and block well. Gaining an average of twelve yards in every try, he was the country's best ground-gainer in 1938. He led all college players in yardage of returned punts. In 1940 and '41 his performances were such that many experts gave him All-America rating.

During the 1939-'40 basketball season, from his right-forward position he scored a season total of 148 points to lead the Pacific Coast Conference. He led the same group in points scored again the following season.

In track it was the same story. He broke the Pacific Coast Conference broad-jump record with a leap of

twenty-five feet, and later at Minneapolis won the national college title in the same event—but with a mark one and three-fourths inches shorter. He played tennis in a California Negro tournament. And he brought his golf score down into the eighties.

All this time baseball was still a “minor” sport with Jackie. He played at UCLA, and also was a shortstop on a state amateur champion team from Pasadena, batting .400 and stealing seven bases in one game. But baseball still remained a sideline.

Financial troubles meanwhile began to bother Mother Robinson. Some of her children got married. Then in 1938 tragedy struck when Jackie’s brother Frank was killed in an automobile accident. So, in order to help support his mother, Jackie decided in his junior year to leave college. He took a job with the National Youth Administration, an early step in his desire to work with young people.

“I had offers to join professional football teams,” says the sturdy, six-foot athlete, “but I wanted to remain an amateur so that I could play with the college team in the All-Star game against the Chicago Bears at Chicago in August, 1941. I did play, and we lost the game by a score of 37-13. But it was a big thrill, one of my biggest, playing before those 98,000 fans in Soldiers’ Field. Tommy Harmon<sup>8</sup> played in that game, too, in the same backfield with me.”

After that game, he no longer had any reason for remaining an amateur athlete, and he sorely needed

<sup>8</sup>See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Ninth Series.

money. He cast his lot with the Los Angeles Bulldogs eleven in the fall of 1941. The team went to Hawaii for part of its schedule. As the boat was leaving to return from the islands, the people aboard heard a heavy, booming sound coming from behind them. The date was December 7, 1941, and the dull roar that came to the ears of Jackie Robinson and his fellow passengers was the sound of Japanese bombs hurtling down on Pearl Harbor.

The following April, Jackie was drafted into the United States Army. After basic training, he went to officers' candidate school and won a second lieutenant's commission. While in the Army, he engaged in personnel work. Then the Army doctors took a closer look at him.

"You have 'football ankles,'" they told him. "They are not strong enough for the Army."

So in November 1944, after two years and a half of military life, Jackie received his medical discharge.

He spent the winter of 1944-'45 as basketball coach at Sam Houston College for Negroes in Austin, Texas. His team won the city championship, and Jackie was highly regarded by everyone with whom he came in contact. He established the school's first complete physical education program while there. Later, when he left to play professional baseball with the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Baseball League, he presented the college with many of his athletic trophies and medals.

The Monarchs were in spring training at nearby



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Houston, Texas, and Jackie agreed to play shortstop with them for \$400 a month. On the same team was the ancient and fabulous Leroy (Satchel) Paige, veteran Negro pitcher who, during the 1948 season, finally reached the big leagues with the Cleveland Indians. And it was Jackie Robinson whose success in the majors made possible Paige's belated chance.

Jackie held down the shortstop post for the Monarchs, batting .349 in one hundred games. It was a grueling life, traveling about the country in decrepit buses, living at worse than second-rate hotels, and playing without the proper rest. Jackie did not like it, and resolved to quit as soon as he could. But for the present he needed that \$400 a month. For one thing, he wanted to get married.

Then came his break. It was the chance which Negro athletes and fans had prayed and fought for during the previous seventy years—ever since organized baseball had begun. It was the opportunity for one of their race to play in the major leagues.

In 1945 big-league magnates were desperate for player talent, undeveloped during the long war years. Colored players were proving in their own leagues that they had the skill and stamina to perform in the big show. All that was needed was some major-league executive with the courage, foresight, and fairness to sign a Negro to a contract.

That man now appeared. He was Branch Rickey, dynamic, shrewd, and capable general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers of the National League. He was an

ex-major-league player who once was traded to another team because he would not play ball on Sunday, a developer of baseball talent who had been front office man of the St. Louis Cardinals for thirty years, and an extremely astute judge of young players' ability.

Rickey's scouts reported that Jackie Robinson was the outstanding prospect in the Negro leagues. So in August 1945, Rickey sent Clyde Sukeforth, former big-league catcher, to Chicago, where Jackie was scheduled to play against the Chicago American Giants at Comiskey Park. At first Jackie thought Sukeforth was kidding when he broached the subject of signing Jackie to a contract in the majors. But finally he was convinced and boarded the train for Brooklyn with Sukeforth.

On August 29, 1945, the twenty-six-year-old colored star made history by affixing his name to a contract with a major-league organization. He did not, however, sign a Dodger contract. He was hired to play for the Montreal International League team, a Dodger farm.

The signing led to all sorts of comment. Editorially, most writers supported the move. Others felt that Jackie was being brought up too fast, and that if he failed it would hurt the Negro cause more than it would help. At first the leaders of the Negro Baseball League (they were white men) objected because they had not been paid for their star player. They said Jackie had been "stolen" from them, whereas he should have been purchased. But Jackie revealed that he never

signed a contract with them, and was playing on a game-to-game basis. He was legally entitled to quit for a better job at any time.

Jackie married his college sweetheart, Rachel Isum, early in 1946. She had majored in nursing at UCLA. Then in late February, the same year, he left Los Angeles with his bride for Daytona Beach, Florida, where the Montreal squad was to train. Another Negro player, Pitcher John Wright, had been signed by Branch Rickey. The two rookies stayed with a Negro family in Daytona Beach, and the next day motored to nearby Sanford, where a large group of player hopefuls was trying out.

White players expressed no resentment at the presence of Jackie and Wright. Later, however, they learned that there were local Florida laws against Negroes and whites performing on the same field together. In Sanford, Jacksonville and Deland they ran up against this racial discrimination. At some places Jackie was allowed to play, at others not. It must be said, however, that it was not the Southern fans themselves who in general objected. And Montreal Manager Clay Hopper, a Mississippian, gave the Negro players scrupulously fair treatment.

During the course of training, Jackie was shifted to second base, and it was at that post that he was a Montreal regular in 1946.

His real debut came when the season opened at Roosevelt Stadium in Jersey City on April 18, 1946. The place was jammed with more than 25,000 fans. Jackie

said later he was nervous. Even so he got four hits, one a long home run over the left-field fence. Another was a bunt which Jackie beat out. He scored four runs and stole two bases. He had seven chances in the field and handled six of them. Twice on third base he had the Jersey City pitcher so upset that the pitcher balked. The Royals won the game, 14-1.

It was an auspicious beginning. Jackie played good ball all year. Well-wishers feared he might have some trouble because of racial feeling in Baltimore, considered a Southern city. But nothing unpleasant occurred there. Instead it was in Syracuse, New York, that Jackie had one distasteful experience. But he came out of that on top.

While playing against the Syracuse Chiefs, Jackie appeared at bat with men on base. Someone in the Chiefs' dugout let loose a black cat and yelled that it was Robinson's cousin. Jackie saw red for a moment, but remained silent.

Thinking that perhaps the best way to answer them was to give the ball a long ride Jackie swung hard at the first good pitch. He connected and the ball sailed into the far outfield for extra bases. Jackie never heard any more about his tomcat "cousin."

By late August, Montreal had won the International League flag. At the end of the season, as the Royals were on the train to Louisville, Kentucky to play the champions of the American Association in the Little World Series, Jackie as batting king of his league could look back upon the following excellent 1946 record:

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Batting average: .349 (highest in I. L.)

Bases stolen: 40 (second in I. L.)

Runs scored: 113 (tied for I. L. lead)

Fielding average: .985 (best among I. L. second basemen) Ten errors in 119 games.

At Louisville, the fans were harsher on Jackie than throughout the entire International League. They seemed to resent his presence as a Negro. This attitude upset him, and he batted a weak .200 in three games. The team dropped two of those contests. But back in Montreal amid friendly surroundings Jackie and the team hit their real stride. The star second-sacker batted .400 in the three games at home, all of which the Royals won. Jackie scored the winning marker in the last game, giving Montreal the Little World Series title.

Montreal fans went wild with joy. They mobbed the Royal players. Hundreds of them chased Jackie down the street, trying to congratulate him, until an automobile driver rescued him.

That fall Robinson organized a team of Negro stars and played a fourteen-game barnstorming tour against a group of National Leaguers managed by Charlie Dresen. During the winter, he kept in shape on the basketball court playing with the professional Los Angeles Red Devils.

The next spring he reported to the Brooklyn camp at Havana, Cuba. Sagacious Branch Rickey felt that in Cuba there would be less racial feeling. He had, besides Jackie, three other Negroes on his squad.

First thing Jackie knew, someone threw a first-baseman's glove at him. "Eddie Stanky is the Dodger key-stone sacker," he was told. "If you want to play for the Dodgers, you will have to learn to be a first baseman."

Jackie was astounded. He had never (except for a brief time the year before) worn a first-baseman's mitt. His heart sank. He would never make it.

But with practice he swiftly caught on to the tricks of the first-baseman's trade. He was such a natural athlete that he could learn to play almost any position expertly. On a seven-game trip to Panama, he hit, fielded, and ran the bases like a big-leaguer. Here he showed the blinding speed which was to be one of his greatest assets as a player.

Then came the red-letter day. On April 10, 1947, Branch Rickey handed him a Dodger contract. The championship season was to begin five days later. It was all up to Jackie now. Only he could answer the momentous question: Is Jackie Robinson a major-league ball player?

"I've got to make good!" was the thought which ran through Jackie's mind as he proudly signed his Dodger contract.

Jackie's baptism of fire came at Ebbets Field on April 15, 1947, against the Boston Braves. He fielded his first-base position well, though he failed to get a base hit. Nevertheless, the Dodgers won the game, 5-3, and he was satisfied. His own record for the game was three runs sacrificed in, no hits, and fifteen chances handled without an error.

His first major-league home run came two days later against the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds.

He knew that his biggest problem outside of his actual playing would be to keep his temper if he began to get a "riding" because of his race. On the road, he roomed with a Negro baseball writer. In every city except St. Louis and Philadelphia they lived in the same hotel that the other players occupied. And a national magazine that year printed an indignant letter from a native-born Philadelphian protesting the discrimination of the Pennsylvania city.

Steadily Jackie's baseball ability, his even temper (even though he had come up to the big leagues with a reputation as a "hothead"), his strict attention to business, and his gentlemanly conduct won him more and more friends among fans, players and sports writers. He could dig low throws out of the dirt, sidestep the charging base runner, and throw the ball with an effortless grace that drew the admiration of onlookers.

He had his slumps at the plate, but there were times, too, when his bat caught fire. During June he reeled off a twenty-one-game hitting streak, collecting forty-three hits that month for an average of .377. He missed only three of the season's 154 championship games.

There were a few unpleasant occurrences that might have been based on racial discrimination, but on the whole Jackie admits he has no real kick coming on that score. It was easier for him than many people expected.

And in May, when it was rumored that certain St. Louis players planned a strike against Robinson's presence in the Brooklyn line-up, National League President Ford Frick squelched the move with a forcefully written statement that will stand as a model against such incidents for all time. He said:

"All players who strike will be suspended, even if it wrecks the National League. This is the United States of America, and one citizen has as much right to play as another. The National League will go down the line with Robinson. You will find that if you go through with your intention to strike that you have been guilty of complete madness."

The strike never took place.

One of Jackie's happiest moments his first season in the majors occurred when, after a game in Chicago, his Brooklyn teammates laughed at him. It came about in this way. During the game a hard-hit ground ball struck his foot and stopped dead. As infielders Pee Wee Reese and Eddie Stanky hollered at him to look down for the ball, the Cub runner scampered to second. Jackie, thinking the ball had broken through him into the outfield, just stood there.

In the Brooklyn locker room after the game, burly relief pitcher Hugh Casey came over to where Jackie was sitting and solemnly informed him the club was buying him a new glove.

"What do I need a new glove for, Hugh?" Robinson asked, puzzled.



"We're going to put it on your foot," Casey grinned, going into an imitation of Robinson's "boner" that soon had the Dodgers roaring with laughter. And Jackie laughed harder than the others. In his teammates' wholesome kidding he recognized the sign he had been seeking. He knew now that henceforth they considered him one of them.

The Dodgers clinched the league pennant in September and waited for the coming World Series with the American League champions, the New York Yankees. Jackie Robinson finished his first big-league season with a batting average of .296, and led the National League in stolen bases with twenty-nine, sacrifice hits with twenty-eight, and took part in more double plays than any other first baseman. He hit twelve home runs.

Before going with Jackie into the World Series, we might look at three honors given him for his 1947 play. *The Sporting News* of St. Louis, bible of the baseball world, chose him as Rookie of the Year. Later the Chicago chapter of the Baseball Writers' Association gave him a memorial award in honor of his outstanding performance.

On September 22, 1947 the deliriously happy fans of Flatbush gave him a "Day." He was presented with a new sedan, a television set, a watch, and other gifts. He was proud that his wife and mother both could be present. The New York *Amsterdam News* honored him with a plaque reading:

## A Tribute to an Outstanding Player

## JACKIE ROBINSON

In recognition of his personal achievements  
in promoting better inter-racial understanding.

Presented by

New York *Amsterdam News* Welfare Fund

Jackie Robinson Day

Sept. 22, 1947

Ebbets Field

The World Series of 1947 was in many ways an unusual and thrilling one. In the first place, the Dodgers were underdogs, and they seemed to prove the wisdom of the experts by losing the first two games.

At Yankee Stadium in the first game, Yankee Pitcher Frank (Specs) Shea held Brooklyn to six hits and won, 5-3. Jackie went hitless in this contest, but stole one base and scored a run. Allie Reynolds pitched the Yanks to a 10-3 victory in the second game. Here Jackie made two hits, one a double, and batted in a run.

Brooklyn roared back in Ebbets Field to win the third and fourth games (9-8 and 3-2) and tie the series. Robinson garnered two singles in the third and went hitless in the fourth game. Dodger utility infielder "Cookie" Lavagetto won the fourth game with a pinch double that wrecked Yankee Floyd Bevens' no-hit game, after two were out in the ninth!

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Frank Shea pitched again for the Yankees in the fifth game and won again, by a score of 2-1. Robinson had one single. Little Al Gionfriddo, Dodger substitute outfielder, saved the sixth game for Brooklyn with a circus catch against the left-field railing off Joe DiMaggio with the bases loaded as the Series shifted back to Yankee Stadium. Brooklyn went on to win, 8-6, and Robinson contributed a double and a single.

The seventh and deciding game was a Yankee victory, 5-2. Robinson went hitless but batted in one run. Brooklyn, with a none-too-strong pitching staff, used an army of hurlers throughout the Series.

Here is Jackie Robinson's 1947 World Series record:

G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Bat. Avg.	PO	A	E	Fld. Avg.
7	27	3	7	2	0	0	3	2	.259	49	6	0	1.000

His name goes in the record books with those of Pee Wee Reese and Dixie Walker<sup>4</sup> because these three players shared in hitting the most consecutive doubles (3) in one inning of a World Series game.

Jackie, it is said, received the minimum legal salary, \$5,000, for his regular season service in 1947 with the Dodgers. He made some stage appearances after the season, however; and his share as a member of the World Series losing team was \$4,081. Each full-share Yankee received \$5,830.

He was, of course, the first Negro player in a World Series, but not the only one. For Negro Pitcher Dan Bankhead, whom Rickey brought up to the Dodgers

<sup>4</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Ninth Series.

late in the season, got into the sixth game as a pinch runner.

Jackie is a strong, hard-muscled athlete whose best playing weight is around 190 pounds. He bats and throws right-handed. He was much overweight when he reported for the start of the 1948 season, but he gradually worked off the excess flesh. In the off-season he lives with his wife and son, Jackie Jr., in Los Angeles. He neither drinks nor smokes, and likes to keep in good condition. Plenty of sleep is a "must" for Jackie. Athletics is his main interest in life after his family, and he hopes to make a profession of physical education work with young people when his playing days are over.

**JACK ROOSEVELT ROBINSON**

Born, Carol, Georgia, January 31, 1919.

Bats right. Throws right. Height, 5' 11½". Weight, 190 pounds.

Year	Club	League	Pos.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
1946	Montreal	I.L.	2b	124	444	113	155	25	8	3	66	40	.349	261	385	10	.985
1947	Brooklyn	N.L.	1b	151	590	125	175	31	5	12	48	29	.297	1323	92	16	.989
1948	Brooklyn	N.L.	inf	147	574	108	170	38	8	12	85	22	.296	514	342	15	.983

**COMPLETE MAJOR LEAGUE TOTALS**

2 years	298	1164	233	345	69	13	24	133	51	.296	1387	434	31	.987
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**WORLD SERIES RECORD**

1947 Brooklyn	N.L.	1b	7	27	3	7	2	0	0	3	2	.259	49	6	0	1.000
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JOHN FRANKLIN (JOHNNY) SAIN, JR.

*“Twenty-Game Winner for Three  
Consecutive Years”*





JOHN FRANKLIN (JOHNNY) SAIN, JR.





## CHAPTER XIV

JOHN FRANKLIN (JOHNNY) SAIN, JR.  
"TWENTY-GAME WINNER FOR THREE  
CONSECUTIVE YEARS"

THE scene was the Boston Braves' clubhouse immediately following the opening game of the 1948 World Series. Billy Southworth's club, the Cinderella team of the National League, had just taken the series opener from the heavy-hitting Cleveland Indians, 1-0, and the room presented the scene of pandemonium one would expect to see in the quarters of the underdog who has just enjoyed more than his day. Players ran around slapping each other, rumpling each other's uniforms in wild glee, or just yelling to work off the emotional head of steam they had built up during the ball game. Things in the dugout a few minutes before had been so tense several players had been unable to watch the final outs of the game recorded. Clint Conaster, utility outfielder, and Manager Billy Southworth had, in fact, ducked nervously into the dark tunnel leading from the dugout back under the stands to the players' locker rooms, for quick, nervous puffs on a cigarette.

The minute the game was over, players, newspaper and radio men and photographers fought their way

into the winning Braves' locker room and, as the numbers increased, so did the happy noise and confusion.

Unquestionably the calmest man in the room was the pitching hero of the day. Across the way outfielder Tommy Holmes, whose timely hit had driven in the game's only run, was the center of a yelling mob who fought their way to his side to congratulate him. Yet here sat quiet Johnny Sain, the Braves "money" pitcher, carefully stripping off his wet uniform as he listened attentively to the questions of the reporters and gave his answers. Now and then the big fellow smiled slightly or looked up to thank a well-wisher. Mostly, though, he just sat there, gratefully enjoying the smoke and the rest he had just earned.

Things hadn't always been thus for the big fellow. Although the same person, the Sain who a few minutes before had curled a curve over to strike out Walter Judnich for the last out of the game was a far cry from the rookie who had spent four long years toiling in a Class D league and who, on three separate occasions, had been sent home a failure from professional-baseball training camps.

Johnny Sain was born at Havana, Arkansas, September 25, 1918 of French-Irish ancestry. His father, a mechanic who had played some semi-pro baseball as a left-handed pitcher, had baseball ambitions for his son and from an early age Johnny's schooling followed the familiar father-son pattern of so many major-league baseball players. John attended high school in Havana, playing on the football, basketball and track

teams. The school had no baseball team and, as he wryly admits now, the town was too small for an American Legion team. Johnny did pitch for Havana's semi-pro team.

In those early years, the teen-age pitcher received much advice and many valuable tips from Jim Walkup, a former major-leaguer with the St. Louis Browns. Like any strong-armed youth of that or the present day, Johnny's idea of pitching was to rear back and blow the opposition down with speed. If he'd ever heard of change of pace, he never deigned to use it. Walkup, however, corrected that.

The two threw a lot to each other and from the beginning Walkup insisted that Sain start to work on a change-up. After a while, Johnny listened to the sage advice. Pretty soon he learned to master the pitch and with the mastery came a gratifying improvement in his control.

In 1936 Sain felt encouraged enough to try his hand at professional baseball. That spring, with hopes high, he set out for spring training with the Knoxville, Tennessee club. Evidently he didn't have as much as he thought, for the best the club offered him was a chance to pitch with a Troy, Alabama affiliate. Johnny signed the agreement binding him to the Troy team and then went home to await orders when and where to report. When the mail came it contained not the expected orders but rather the agreement he had signed. Evidently he wasn't good enough for Troy.

Refusing to become discouraged, Johnny pitched in

the Rock Island League, finally earning a tryout under Doc Prothro at Little Rock. The tryout was held before a night game of the Southern Association team. This time the results were a little more encouraging. Prothro sent him to Osceola, a Red Sox farm in the Northeast Arkansas League. There he pitched in eleven games, winning five and losing three. In seventy-six innings he allowed seventy-one hits, struck out forty-four and gave thirty-two bases on balls. His earned-run average was 2.72.

One Sunday Red Sox farm-club director Billy Evans and Prothro went to Osceola to see Sain pitch. Obviously they weren't impressed for when the Osceola club blew up after the 1937 season, the Sox let Sain slip away. Probable reason was the uninspiring 4.13 earned-run average he posted that year.

This time Sain admits he was more than a little discouraged. In his own mind he thought he had earned a promotion, if not to a Class B league, then at least to a Class C one. But again Johnny refused to give up. Determined to stick to baseball despite his two disappointing setbacks, he paid his own way to Fort Smith for a tryout with the two New York Giant farm clubs in training there—Blythville and Fort Smith. Johnny figured to make the grade with one of the teams, preferably the Class C Western League Fort Smith team, but again it was nothing doing. Neither club wanted him. This time, in addition to his other woes, Johnny was out the carfare he had gambled on the tryout.

Twice a failure in as many years, Sain had too

much pride to go home and face his Havana neighbors. Instead he made his way to Greenville, Mississippi where he received modest encouragement until he tried to collect the carfare money he had laid out. Fortunately, the Hot Springs club was at Greenville and Johnny caught a ride home on their bus. He managed to stick with Hot Springs briefly—he thinks it was about two weeks—and then he was given his third release, to his great disappointment.

But not even Sain's luck could continue so bad. He finally got a break in May of 1938 when he was signed to pitch for Newport of the Northeast Arkansas League. At that time Newport was a Chicago Cubs farm.

Sain's salary with Newport wasn't much—something in the neighborhood of \$75 per month, so to supplement his baseball earnings he got a part-time job as a soda jerk. He had a fine year with Newport. Using mostly a curve ball and the change of pace he had learned from Jim Walkup, he won sixteen games while losing but four. His control was improving, for in 172 innings he walked but forty-eight men while striking out 111. His earned-run average was again 2.72. The following year, 1939, he worked even harder. Appearing in twenty-nine games, he posted an eighteen-and-ten record, a 3.27 earned-run average. He walked seventy-six and struck out 175.

Despite his fine two-year record of thirty-four victories, Johnny again found himself out of a job when, in 1939, Judge Landis declared him and ninety other

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Detroit farm hands free agents. Detroit had taken over the Newport club from the Chicago Cubs. Nothing daunted, he wrote a letter to Larry Gilbert, manager of the Nashville Vols of the Southern Association. In place of the "not interested" notices he had grown accustomed to finding in the mail, Johnny received the proper answer from Gilbert and in 1940 he signed with the Vols. He won eight and lost four that year as Nashville won the pennant and the Dixie Series. However, the following year he slumped to six wins and twelve defeats.

Overwork contributed to his uninspiring record in 1941. On one occasion he lost two one-run games the same day and on another he started and relieved on successive days, again losing a pair of one-run decisions. In spite of this, Manager Gilbert had sufficient doubts as to Johnny's eventual pitching success to suggest to him that he try his hand at first base. Stubbornness and a deep conviction in his own ability, combined to make Johnny ignore the proffered advice. He was determined to stick to pitching.

Some years before, just about the time Sain was taking his first steps in professional ball with Osceola, there occurred an incident involving Larry Gilbert that was to have a strong effect on Sain's career. That year, it was either 1936 or '37, Gilbert had gone to the Boston Braves' training camp at St. Petersburg touting the talents of a left-handed pitcher named Bill Perrin. So sold was Gilbert on the player and so strong his recommendation that the Braves were quick to sign him.

As happens occasionally to even the best of baseball talent scouts, Perrin failed to make the grade.

Gilbert felt badly about it, considering himself responsible for having oversold the Boston club on what he had considered a fine prospect. As the years passed, he bided his time, determined to make things up someday to the Boston organization. That is how, in the spring of 1942, he happened to recommend Sain to the Braves. Knowing the need of the Boston pitching staff for a relief pitcher, he figured Sain's remarkable control and sweeping curve ball might provide him with the necessary equipment to get by. His proposal to the Braves was to look Sain over in spring training and either keep him or return him.

Manager Casey Stengel looked and apparently liked what he saw. In his first fifteen innings in camp that year Sain permitted but two runs. On April 8 he became the property of the Braves.

Johnny appeared in forty games for the Braves that year, winning four and losing seven. His earned-run average was 3.90. Manager Stengel often called him the "Johnny Murphy of the Braves," after the famed relief pitcher of the New York Yankees. Opponents, too, were impressed. Eddie Joost struck out with the bases loaded the first time he faced Sain, and Elmer Valo, after an exhibition game, accused him of throwing a curve from behind his ear.

Yet good as his curve was, the pitch was standing in Johnny's way of achieving pitching greatness. It was so good he used it all the time, seldom resorting to his



so-called fastball and practically never experimenting with any new deliveries. Then, in August of 1942, the best thing that could have happened to him took place. On the twenty-first of that month he enlisted in the United States Naval Air Corps.

Unlike many ball players whose careers were interrupted or halted by the war, Sain owes his present-day pitching prowess to his years in the service. Entering the Navy on November 15, he was sent to Amherst College along with major leaguers Ted Williams, Johnny Pesky and Joe Coleman. From there he moved to North Carolina Pre-Flight where, in 1943, he pitched on a team that included, in addition to the previously mentioned players, Buddy Hassett, Dusty Cooke and Harry Craft.

They and other experienced major-league stars took a liking to the tall, quiet ball player from Arkansas. They began to pass along tips and suggestions for improving his pitching. Mature enough to see the wisdom in their words, Johnny began to listen. Though still a great competitor and just as anxious to win as he had always been, Sain took time out during the easier service games he worked to experiment with several new pitches. He added a variety of speed-curves to his repertoire to go with his scythe-like standby and began to fool around again with a change-up.

He won twelve and lost four games that year. His best day came before a crowd of 40,000 that turned out for a war-charity battle at Yankee Stadium in which he took part. The service stars played a team of

combined Cleveland Indians and New York Yankees that included Babe Ruth. Sain pitched to the Babe and walked him—having promised beforehand not to throw any curves and the umpire behind the plate being just as determined not to call any strikes on the immortal Bambino. The final score of the game was 11-5. Johnny went the distance, allowing only seven hits. Oddly, Oris Hockett, a teammate of Sain's at Nashville, got three of the seven.

Johnny played as an aviation cadet until June 1, 1944 at which time he was commissioned an ensign in the United States Navy. Sam Chapman, the Philadelphia Athletics outfield star, gave Sain his final pre-commission check-out. Then Johnny moved on to Waldron Field, Corpus Christi. He played ball there, posting a 14-3 record. His team won the pennant in the service league in which it played and met Pensacola in a championship play-off. On the Pensacola team were Cleveland outfielder Bob Kennedy and Ted Williams. Sain won one and lost one on the play-offs. In the first game he struck out Williams three times. Ted returned the compliment in the second game, collecting three hits including a home run. In a subsequent all-star game he kept Williams hitless, fanning him once.

John pitched all of the 1945 season for Waldron Field, winning fifteen and losing but five. Again his team won the pennant and again it faced Pensacola in the play-off. Johnny pitched one of the series games, winning by a 3-1 score and allowing only one hit. He received his naval discharge on November 25.

October 1 of that year he married a Dallas, Texas girl, Doris McBride, who had served as a medical stenographer at the 8th Service Command Headquarters. She was an ardent baseball fan, having saved box tops to see her first game when she was twelve years old. She recalls that on that initial occasion, when the home fans stood up to stretch in the last half of the seventh inning, she thought the game was over and went home.

Today Doris is in charge of her husband's voluminous fan mail. Not long ago Johnny bought her a typewriter to help him with the chore. Still an ardent ball fan, Mrs. Sain's only complaint against her husband's means of earning a livelihood concerns the huge wad of tobacco he carries in his cheek as an on-the-field trademark. Despite her pleas and the bargains she suggests, Johnny goes right along chewing tobacco on the field and being a tractable husband when he is out of uniform.

An illuminating anecdote concerns Johnny's ability to concentrate on a ball field. Shortly after the opening of the 1948 season, President Lou Perini of the Braves thought it advisable to have a heart-to-heart talk with his star pitcher. He had heard stories that Sain was indifferent, dissatisfied, even careless about his pre-game warm-ups.

"Do little things bother you when you're pitching?" he asked. "Things like an umpire missing a call, or a fan yelling at you—or an error?"

Sain smiled and shook his head. "Mr. Perini, when I'm out on that mound, pitching is all I think about."

To illustrate his point, Sain told the club owner about the first game he pitched—and won—during the 1946 season. It was against Brooklyn and the recent bridegroom thought he had turned in a highly creditable performance. That is, until he saw Mrs. Sain seemed a bit downcast after the game.

“What was the matter, didn’t you like the game?” he asked. Mrs. Sain’s answer was, “Yes—but you didn’t wave to me.”

This absorption in his work is not, however, at the sacrifice of Johnny’s disposition. One of the calmest, least ruffled men on a ball field, Sain never allows himself to lose his head or blow up, even under the most trying situation. For example, on July 12, 1946 he was locked in a pitchers’ battle with Ewell Blackwell and the Cincinnati Reds. With two out in the first inning Grady Hatton blooped a fly ball behind third base that fell for a fluke double between three converging Boston fielders, any one of whom could have had it. That hit was the only one made off Sain as he beat the Reds, 1-0. Questioned after the game as to the lone hit which had cost him a place in the hall of fame, Sain admitted that perhaps one of the fielders should have caught the ball. However he refused to be upset.

“Lots of times they catch other balls I don’t expect them to,” was his answer. “Anyway, I’m happy any time I can shut out the Reds, 1-0, and beat Ewell Blackwell at the same time.”

That first year out of the service he won twenty games

and lost fourteen. Included on the debit side of the ledger were two 1-0 games he lost, one of them on a wild pitch. He once held the Chicago Cubs hitless until the seventh inning, only to lose the game, a two-hitter, 3-1. Midway through the season his record was 10-11, which meant that he won ten of his last thirteen games—and those over a stretch when the contending teams were battling harder than ever for the pennant!

The following year he won twenty-one games while losing twelve. His 1948 record of 24-15 saw him the major leagues' leading winner. Yet Sain refuses to get excited about his pitching achievements. His attitude toward the game is that it is strictly a business. He expects to take no bows when he wins and consequently refuses to be upset when he loses. He's one of the hardest workers in the game today, frequently working on successive days without rest. In 1948 he took part in forty-two games, pitching a total of 315 innings. He walked eighty-three, struck out 137 and posted an earned run average of 2.60 that ranked him third in the league behind only Harry Brecheen<sup>1</sup> of the St. Louis Cardinals and Dutch Leonard of the Philadelphia Phillies.

Neither conceited nor overly modest, Sain sets a high price on his worth. After the Braves had paid a huge bonus to schoolboy pitcher Johnny Antonelli to sign a contract, Sain took himself to Tribe President Lou Perini. The occasion was the All-Star game in St. Louis in which Sain took a leading part. In a few, well-

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Tenth Series.

chosen words he told Perini of his years of hard work for the Braves, stressing his record the past two seasons of winning more than twenty games. If the club was in such financial condition to be able to pay a prospect like Antonelli, who had yet to pitch, let alone win a game for the team, a reported bonus of between \$50,000 and \$60,000, it should be just as willing to reward a veteran like himself for past and present service.

Within a matter of hours, the following announcement was forthcoming from Boston press headquarters. "Because of the outstanding job done for the Braves this season by John Sain, he has been given a new contract for the balance of the 1948 campaign, and also has been tendered a new document for 1949." Following a hurried meeting with Braves officials in St. Louis, Sain affixed his name to both agreements.

Excellent workman that he is, Sain has worked carefully to develop the necessary talents to complement his magnificent pitching skill. He fields his position well, his only difficulty being an almost imperceptible slowness in fielding ground balls to his right. He is one of the best-hitting pitchers in baseball, occasionally seeing service as a pinch hitter. Possessor of a smooth, stroking swing, he goes for singles and lets the extra base hits go to the club's number three and four hitters.

Sain has compiled numerous hitting streaks but the one that stands out is a string of fourteen consecutive games in which he hit safely during the 1947 season. He started the skein June 26, getting one hit in two

at-bats against Brooklyn. July 4 he had three hits in four at-bats against the Phillies. One week later, July 11, he was one for two against the Reds. July 14 he had the same total with the Chicago Cubs. July 19 he continued his string, getting one hit in three times at bat against Pittsburgh. The following day he was one for one, again against the Pirates. Against Chicago on July 23 he had one hit in five at-bats. He picked up on the 27th, getting three hits in five at-bats versus the Cardinals. August 1 he went two for three against Cincinnati. He did the same against Brooklyn on August 5. The ninth of the month it was one for four with, this time, the New York Giants unable to stop him. One week later he hit twice in three at-bats against the same Giants. August 20 against Pittsburgh he had one hit in two times at bat, getting the same figures the following day against the Cubs.

During the fourteen consecutive games in which he hit safely, Sain went to bat forty-one times and collected twenty-one hits for a phenomenal .512 average. Over two seasons he went to bat 205 times and struck out but once. In 1948 he set a National League record for sacrifice hits by a pitcher with sixteen.

Deadly serious about baseball, Sain has his own training program which he annually observes at the Braves' spring camp in Florida. Johnny argues, and with convincing logic, that a pitcher's main concern in conditioning himself should be to get his arm in shape. No subscriber to the theory that pitchers should

get in condition by running, Sain has become one of the earliest throwers in the spring training camps. The first one out on the practice field at Bradenton, he is frequently the last to leave. There he has his own personal pitching mound, located in deep center field where he spends most of his time. His managers never concern themselves about his condition, knowing from past experience that when the opening day of the season rolls around, the big fellow will be ready to step on the mound and begin taking his regular turn.

He never stops working to improve himself. In the spring of 1947 he reported at Fort Lauderdale and immediately began experimenting with a new pitch—a sidearm sinker which breaks down and in to a right-handed hitter. Where did he pick it up?

"I watched Al Brazle of the Cards and Ewell Blackwell of the Reds last year and both their best pitches seemed to be sinkers. They did pretty well with 'em so I thought I'd try it this year."

Overhearing the remarks, a teammate of Sain's laughed. "A new pitch for Sain? What is it, underhand? It must be because that's the only pitch the guy hasn't got."

The hours of hard work have more than paid off for Sain. Such is his control and such his mastery of the various speed-curve balls he throws, he thinks nothing of coming through with a curve on a 3-0 or even a 3-2 count.

For all his seriousness, Sain has the wit and sly drollery of the natural humorist. One year the Braves took



to their Florida training camp a brash, young first baseman named Torgeson who had compiled quite a record with the Seattle club of the Pacific Coast League. Hours on end in the evenings Torgy would sit on the front steps of the hotel earnestly telling Sain what a thrill it was to be playing ball with major-leaguers like himself and the other Braves. After a while John would reach in his pocket and offer the rookie one of his pet cigars.

It took Sain two weeks before he tumbled to the fact that Torgeson's adulation act was a skillfully contrived means of supplying himself with choice smokes at Johnny's expense. The very next day the pitcher took himself to Tampa where he had a box of "special cigars" made up expressly for Torgeson's consumption. A little vague now on the details, Sain admits the "specials" were approximately half-rubber, half-rope. Not too many evenings later Torgeson started buying his own cigars.

Sain's position as the bellwether of the Braves is firmly settled. He is the big guy, the one dependable pitcher every pennant-winning club must have. Howie Pollett was just that for the St. Louis Cardinals in 1946 and Dizzy Dean<sup>2</sup> and Mort Cooper<sup>3</sup> filled the role for earlier Cardinal teams. During the Braves' drive toward the 1948 National League pennant an oft-repeated couplet around Braves Field best summed up the attitude of Bostonians toward their pitching main-

<sup>2</sup>See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Fifth Series.

<sup>3</sup>See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Ninth Series.

stay. The couplet, a mock summation of Manager Southworth's daily pitching rotation, went:

*Spahn and Sain  
And pray for rain.*

Spahn is, of course, the brilliant left-hander, Warren Spahn.

Johnny Sain wrapped up 1948 with two magnificent pitching performances in the World Series with the Cleveland Indians. In the first game, played in Boston, he bested Bob Feller in a tight mound duel, 1-0, giving up but four hits to the two allowed by Feller. In the fourth game, played in Cleveland's huge Municipal Stadium, he again pitched nine innings, this time losing a five-hitter to Steve Gromek, 2-1. He worked with but two days' rest, repeating his opening-game feat of not giving up a single base on balls.

Sain doesn't know how long he'll be around the majors; however, of one thing he is certain. When the time comes for him to retire, he and Mrs. Sain should be well taken care of for the rest of their lives. Despite his position as one of the National League's top-salaried stars, Johnny and his wife live lives of quiet dignity, preferring banking and investing John's earnings to opulent spending.

During the winter of 1948 Johnny purchased a home for himself and Mrs. Sain in Newport, Arkansas. The reason was simple enough. John liked the people there.

## 278 FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES

"They were awfully kind to me during my early days as a soda jerk, so I know they'll still be with me when I'm on my way down from the majors."

### JOHN FRANKLIN SAIN, JR.

Born, Havana, Arkansas, September 25, 1918.

Bats right. Throws right. Height, 6' 2". Weight, 200 pounds.

Year	Club	League	G	IP	W	L	Pct.	SO	BB	H	Avg.
1936	Osceola	N.E. Ark.	11	76	5	3	.625	44	32	71	2.72
1937	Osceola	N.E. Ark.	24	135	5	8	.385	72	64	128	4.13
1938	Newport	N.E. Ark.	21	172	16	4	.800	111	48	162	2.72
1939	Newport	N.E. Ark.	29	220	18	10	.643	175	76	214	3.27
1940	Nashville	S.A.	30	97	8	4	.667	49	52	98	4.45
1941	Nashville	S.A.	41	139	6	12	.333	93	71	160	4.60
1942	Boston	N.L.	40	97	4	7	.364	68	63	79	3.90
1943, 1944, 1945	(In the United States Navy)										
1946	Boston	N.L.	37	265	20	14	.588	129	87	225	2.21
1947	Boston	N.L.	38	266	21	12	.636	132	79	265*	3.52
1948	Boston	N.L.	42	315*	24*	15	.615	137	83	297*	2.60

Complete Major League

totals, 4 years      157 943 69 48 .590 466 312 866 2.88

\*Indicates led league or was tied for lead.

### WORLD SERIES RECORD

1948 Boston N.L.      2 17 1 1 .500      9 0 9 1.06

### ALL STAR TOTALS

1947 N.L.      1 0 1 .000      1 0 2 9.000  
 1948 N.L.      1½ 0 0 .000      3 0 0 0.000

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2½ 0 1 .000      4 0 2 3.38

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VERNON DECATUR (VERN)  
STEPHENS, JR.

*“ ‘Little Slug’ of the Boston Red Sox”*

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VERNON DECATUR (VERN) STEPHENS, JR.



## CHAPTER XV

VERNON DECATUR (VERN) STEPHENS, JR.  
“‘LITTLE SLUG’ OF THE BOSTON RED SOX”

ON SEPTEMBER 13, 1941, the St. Louis Browns were playing the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park. During the game a twenty-year-old infielder named Stephens made his major-league debut as a pinch runner for the St. Louis club. A little over seven years elapsed before the same player moved to the Red Sox in one of the biggest combined money-player deals in baseball history.

Vernon Decatur Stephens, Jr. (his father still doesn't know where the Decatur came from) was born in McAlister, New Mexico on October 23, 1920. His father, a farmer, had never played baseball although later he served for a while as an umpire in the Western League.

Two years after Junior's birth, the Stephenses moved to California. Junior's dad went to work as a milk-delivery supervisor and Mrs. Stephens went about the business of rearing her two young sons. Almost from the first Junior showed a proficiency in athletics. The Stephens home, located some five miles outside of Long Beach, was the only house on the block, and accordingly there was plenty of room for two growing kids



to run and stretch their muscles. Before long Stephens Sr. had constructed two basketball hoops and backboards on which Junior and his older brother could practice. In time baseballs, bats and gloves were added to the growing supply of athletic equipment and it wasn't long before Dad Stephens was pitching to his sons every evening after work.

As a youngster, Junior formed the catcher part of a brother battery. By the time he was ten he was playing with boys several years his senior, and three years later he began playing American Legion baseball. He continued playing Legion baseball through high school, at the same time playing on the Polytechnic High School team. Summer vacations he played with the Arthur Patterson Post Legion team for even in those early days, he had decided that he'd "rather play ball than eat."

Later he went with the Samuel Thomas Post team where he was a teammate of Bob Lemon of the Cleveland Indians, Ed Bockman of the Pittsburgh Pirates and Cliff Mapes of the New York Yankees. It was Bobby Hughes, coach of the Thomas Post team, who changed Junior from a second baseman to a shortstop.

Despite his desire to play ball, Junior was pretty much on the puny side. In his senior year in high school he weighed less than one hundred pounds. Although later a baseball and basketball player of no small reputation, the local high-school coach wouldn't take him seriously when he came out for the team. "Too small," were the words of dismissal.

Turned down by the coach, Junior began to do a lot of swimming. Long Beach is set squarely on the edge of the sunny Pacific and like any other boy growing up in Southern California, Junior naturally drifted toward the beach on afternoons when he wasn't playing ball. Pretty soon he began to develop. His chest deepened and his shoulders began to fill out and broaden. He picked up needed weight until, by the time he started his career in professional baseball, he weighed a solid one hundred and fifty-five pounds.

Despite his love for baseball, Junior stuck pretty close to his books through high school. His mother saw to that. Formerly an English teacher in Oklahoma, she personally supervised his studies, tutoring him whenever and wherever necessary. As a result Junior went through high school on a steady diet of A's and B's with the exception of one solitary C.

In 1936 the Thomas Post team won the Southern California sectional championship. Major-league scouts were already beginning to look over the young short-stop with the powerful throwing arm and at the sectional tournament in Sacramento he was finally cornered by scout Willis Butler of the St. Louis Browns. Under age at the time, Junior had his dad do his contract talking for him. Although Mr. and Mrs. Stephens were anxious for Junior to have more of an education, there was no holding him back and an agreement was entered into with the Browns on Junior's promise that he would attend Long Beach Junior College.

He stuck it out a little over one year. Mixing a few

games on the mound with his regular shortstopping chores, he hit .552 for his college team. He also met his future wife there and had a brief bout with the college journalism department. A journalism major, Junior staunchly refused to write about anything but sports.

By June of 1938 he had had enough. His mind made up on a baseball career, he went off to report to the St. Louis Browns' Springfield farm in the Three I League. Although the baseball record books do not show it, he played two games at third base for Springfield, before being shipped to Johnstown of the Middle Atlantic League. There he played in forty games, compiling a .257 batting average and a .936 fielding mark. The reason he didn't play more than forty games was that the club's shortstop that year was Bobby Goff, the manager.

An example of the practical manner in which Junior pursued his career concerns his signing with the St. Louis Browns. It seemed strange that a talented, ambitious youth like Stephens would sign with a perennial tail-ender like the Browns, particularly when the Red Sox and other top-flight American League clubs were after him.

Junior and his dad listened to the various scouts and then talked the entire matter over. The reason they eventually settled on the Browns was that they felt Junior would have an easier time making the parent club than he would say, the Cleveland Indians or Boston Red Sox.

In 1939 the Browns sent Junior to Mayfield in the Kitty Hawk League. There the teen-age Stephens led the league in hitting with a .361 average. Playing in 122 games, he scored 105 runs and made 175 hits. Of these, forty-four were doubles, seven were triples and thirty were home runs. He drove in 123 runs. He also collected forty-eight errors.

That year Junior's baseball career nearly ended as soon as it got under way. Coming out of a hotel, he slipped on the stairs and dislocated his knee. After writhing helplessly in pain for several minutes, the knee was more or less expertly set by a teammate. The injury proved serious enough, however, to exempt Junior from military service during World War II.

However, he led the league in batting, doubles, total bases and runs-batted-in.

Evidently feeling that Stephens was still a year away from Class A ball, the parent Browns sent Junior to Springfield and another shortstop, Bobby Neighbors, to San Antonio, their Class A Texas League farm. Junior was obediently on his way north when he received a telegram in Little Rock, Arkansas. Bobby Neighbors had been injured and Stephens was told to report immediately to San Antonio.

In the Texas city he received valuable help from Manager Marty McManus. Although hitting only .266, he led the league in runs-batted-in with ninety-seven and collected twenty-two home runs (one short of the league best) in what is still known as a "pitchers' league." His fielding, too, improved. McManus took

him in hand, spending hours teaching him some of the tricks of playing shortstop. Despite sixty-four errors, Junior took part in eighty-six double plays. He handled 814 chances, coming up with 514 assists and an even 300 putouts. Shortly after the close of the season, on November 8, he married Bernice Hood. He had just turned twenty.

The following year he went to spring training with the Browns. In April he was optioned to Toledo of the American Association. With Toledo he hit .281. In 153 games at shortstop he cut his error output to forty-four as he handled 268 putouts and 453 assists. He collected thirty-three doubles, eleven triples and fourteen home runs, driving in seventy-four runs. That fall he was called up by the Browns and played three games with them before the close of the season. He hit and fielded the same, .500, getting one hit in his two official at-bats.

When the Browns went to spring training camp in 1942, Junior was the third shortstop, ranking behind Bobby Neighbors and Alan Strange. Before the season was under way, Neighbors followed Johnny Berardino into the Army and Alan Strange retired from the game to go to work in a war plant. Thus, ready or not, the burden of major league play was placed squarely on Stephens's shoulders. He proceeded to make good in a hurry. In 145 games, he upped his American Association average to .294. He drove in ninety-two runs. Still erratic in the field, he

began coming up with brilliant plays to compensate partially for the easy ones he kicked away.

Manager Luke Sewell claimed he never saw a player develop as rapidly as Stephens. According to his manager, Junior crowded several years of minor-league development into a few months. He gradually learned to handle the slow-hit balls that had been giving him difficulty. He acquired the knack of going to his left, frequently leaping recklessly at the last moment to deflect or knock down smashes that otherwise would have gone though into the outfield.

He did two remarkable things, over a stretch of games, compiling a consecutive hitting string of seven at-bats and also leading the league in errors.

The year 1943 was a big one for him. On March 8 the first of his two sons, Vernon III, was born. Although it was only his second season in the majors, Junior was named to the American League All Star team, playing the full nine innings under Manager Joe McCarthy. He repeated on the All Star teams of 1944, '46, and '48.

In May of 1943 he suffered another knee injury. This time a separation of the knee cap hospitalized him for several days and contributed to his rejection for military service in June. He was later rejected a second time.

Because of the injury, Junior played several games in the outfield where, it was felt, the greater rest and lack of sudden stops and starts would give his knee a

chance to heal. That year he hit .289, drove in ninety-one runs and hit twenty-two home runs. He was guilty of thirty-four errors, compiling a .945 fielding average.

Possessed of the ideal player's temperament, Junior never allows things to worry or unsettle him. Through the first portion of the 1949 season he had yet to have his first fight with another player or be ejected from a game by an umpire. Sunny, even-tempered, he went along learning to overcome his mistakes, steadily becoming a better player in the process.

A game played in June of 1943 serves to illustrate Junior's unruffled disposition and remarkable ability to come through under pressure.

After leaving the Browns for his Army physical, at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, he rejoined the team in New York. He arrived in time for the June 4 game with the New York Yankees. Facing Spurgeon Chandler,<sup>1</sup> the year's "Most Valuable Player" in the American League, with but one hour's sleep in his last forty-eight, Junior turned in the following remarkable performance.

His first time at bat he doubled off the left-center-field wall. His second time up he hit a home run. He hit another home run his third time at bat in the ninth inning to tie the game at 4-4. His next time up he singled with a man on second. It was hardly his fault that the Browns lost, 6-4, in ten innings. The fact that during his active career Chandler was probably the single pitcher with whom he had the most difficulty,

<sup>1</sup> See FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES OF TODAY, Ninth Series.

adds further credit to this remarkable "under-pressure" performance.

Junior has always specialized in coming through under trying conditions. On September 29 he hit two home runs off Tex Hughson, the first in the eleventh and the second in the thirteenth inning, to lead the Browns to a 4-3 win over the Red Sox. Figures for part of the 1948 season show that he personally broke up fifteen games with his clutch hitting. Stephens' hits at critical times accounted for three Red Sox wins in May, four in June, three in July and five in August.

A partial tabulation of his home-run production (he hit twenty-nine homers in 1948) exemplifies the above. On April 19 he hit a second-inning home run off Phil Marchildon of the A's as the Red Sox bowed. His second-inning homer off Joe Page on May 2 figured in a win over the Yankees. May 5 in the eleventh inning, he hit a game-winning homer off Detroit's Dizzy Trout. May 11 Glenn Moulder of the White Sox was the pitcher who served him a home-run ball in the second inning and then was rash enough to give him the same kind of pitch one inning later, again with the same results. On May 25 he hit a third-inning home run off Sam Zoldak, the Red Sox bowing to the St. Louis Browns.

He caught up with Marchildon again on June 1 for a third-inning homer with one on. In the eighth inning on June 6 against Virgil Trucks of the Tigers he connected for a home run with one on, to win another game for Boston. The same day in the sixth inning



he hit still another home run, this time off Freddie Hutchinson. June 17 he found the range of Steve Gromek of the Cleveland Indians. Three days later Hal Newhouser of the Tigers was the victim of Stephens' ninth-inning blast with two on. June 22 he hit one off Howard Judson of the Chicago White Sox. June 25 Bryan Stephens of the Browns was the victim of another. New York's Vic Raschi was rocked by Junior on June 30. July 1 it was the Yankees' Frank Hiller who gave him a home-run ball with two on in the eighth inning. The Sox lost that game.

Home runs followed against Rae Scarborough of the Senators on July 7, Bill MacCahan of the Philadelphia Athletics on July 10, Al Benton of the Tigers on July 16 and Bob Gillespie of the White Sox on July 22. The same day he hit one off Howard Judson. Cleveland's Russ Christopher, with two on in the eighth inning on July 30, was Junior's next home-run victim, and the Indians' Bob Lemon succumbed in turn on August 1.

A breakdown of this home-run production reveals that of the twenty-two hit during the period from April 19 to August 1, Stephens connected against eighteen different pitchers. Marchildon and Moulder were the only ones he hit more than once. And, more important, of those twenty-two home runs, no less than fifteen were hit in games the Red Sox won, with five of them actually winning the games.

Still talked about is a blast he hit off lanky Russ Christopher of the Cleveland Indians in a night game

at Fenway Park on August 24, 1948. That was the year the Red Sox finished the regular season in an unprecedented tie for first place with the Cleveland Indians. Each meeting of the teams during the regular season was critical, particularly so during the latter weeks of the campaign when the Red Sox were driving to overtake the Clevelanders.

On this occasion the Sox went into the ninth inning, trailing the Indians by an 8-6 margin. The game was particularly important because first place, at least temporarily, hinged directly on the final outcome. Dom DiMaggio opened the ninth by singling off pitcher Ed Klieman. When Johnny Pesky followed with a single to right field that sent DiMaggio to third, Manager Lou Boudreau waved in southpaw Gene Bearden to pitch to Ted Williams. Bearden got him on a fly ball to left, DiMaggio scoring after the catch to make the score 8-7. With Junior Stephens coming up Boudreau made yet another pitching change. He called in right-handed Russ Christopher.

In Junior's own words, "I went up there with the thought of swinging for one." Indeed, as he passed teammate Bobby Doerr kneeling in the on-deck circle, Doerr looked up and told him, "Stevey, you might as well go for the long one." Junior did and Doerr never got to hit. The first pitch, a screwball, disappeared high into the screen atop the left-field wall and with it the Red Sox moved into first place.

In 1944, for the first time in his career, Stephens drove in over 100 runs, his 109 that year being good

enough to lead the league in that important department. His batting average was .293 and his home-run production twenty, just two less than the league-leading twenty-two hit by Nick Etten of the New York Yankees.

That was the year the Browns won their first pennant, so it is easy to see how valuable a contribution Stephens' extra base hitting meant. In addition to his twenty home runs he had thirty-two doubles. Unfortunately, Junior was unable to keep up his torrid pace during the World Series against the Cardinals. In the six games his batting average was but .227 with his only extra base hit being a double.

The following year, 1945, although he failed to make the All Star team, he led the American League in home runs with twenty-four. He drove in eighty-nine runs and hit .289. Yet, remembering his early error-filled days, what was probably more gratifying to him was the fact that he led American League shortstops (in over 100 games) infielding with a .959 average, committing but thirty errors in 149 games at short-stop and third base.

In March of 1946 Stephens became the center of an international incident that, for a while, threatened the harmony and structure of the national pastime. Dissatisfied with the contract the Browns sent him, Stephens held out during the early spring. He was still a holdout and definitely at odds with the St. Louis management when representatives of the suddenly active Mexican League approached him.

Other stars, notably Max Lanier and Lou Klein of the Cardinals, as well as members of the New York Giants were succumbing to the promise of riches south of the border and after a while Junior found the offer of Mexican magnate, Jorge Pasquel, hard to refuse. Considering his first loyalty lay to his family, Junior "jumped" to the Mexican League to the accompaniment of rejoicing across the Rio Grande and wailing in the American League. Loss of one of the league's outstanding stars to the "outlaws" gave the Mexicans a tremendous boost in prestige, doubtless facilitating the signing by the Pasquels of other American ball players.

Junior played in but two games in the Mexican League. In his first on March 31, he singled with the bases loaded in the ninth inning to give Vera Cruz a 5-4 win over Nuevo Laredo. After the game he reportedly signed a five-year contract calling for an annual salary well in excess of the \$15,000 offered him by the Browns. He received a bonus of \$5,000 for signing. He was hitless in his second game.

Then ensued a cloak-and-dagger incident capable of matching anything in secret service files. Junior's father flew to Mexico to see his son after first assuring the Browns he would bring their star shortstop back with him. Jack Fournier, a St. Louis Browns scout, drove the elder Stephens to Monterrey, Mexico, where they found Junior. It took only a few words from his father to make Stephens see that his real duty lay to the baseball players and fans in the United States. He

agreed to accompany Fournier and his dad back home.

But a problem was presented. Anticipating possible attempts to lure Junior back across the border, the influential Pasquels kept their newly-acquired star under close surveillance. One report even had Stephens living in the Pasquel home. Nevertheless, Fournier and his father were able to get Junior into their car and out of Monterrey. So great was Junior's haste to get back to the States that he didn't bother going back to his room to pack his clothes.

As their car approached the international bridge at Laredo, Fournier stopped and Junior got out. Apprehensive of being halted on the Mexican side of the border, he walked across in borrowed clothing while border officials were checking the car in which his dad and the St. Louis scout were riding.

Once safely across, Junior reported to the Browns and Manager Luke Sewell at San Antonio. Immediately Bill De Witt, club vice president, called President Richard Muckerman in St. Louis and contract terms for Stephens were arranged via long-distance telephone. His return to the United States and to organized baseball was with the full approval of American League President Will Harridge.

One of the first things Junior did was to return the bonus advanced him by the Mexican League. He admitted his jump across the border had been a mistake, which he hoped to rectify.

The welcome accorded Stephens by his teammates

is indicative of his popularity with them. Utility infielder Mark Christman, to whom the vacated short-stop position would probably have fallen had Junior remained in Mexico, hailed his return as the "greatest break this club has had in a long time."

Pitcher Bob Muncrief called it the "difference between the first and second division" and hurler Tex Shirley added that it would "boost our morale a hundred per cent."

That year, despite a slow start occasioned partly by his lateness in reporting, Junior topped the .300 mark in hitting for the first time in his major-league career. He hit .307, drove in sixty-four runs and hit fourteen homers. The following year was his last with the Browns for, as has been noted before, on November 17, 1947 he was traded to the Boston Red Sox, the team with which he had always wanted to play. Junior and pitcher Jack Kramer went to Boston in exchange for players Ed Pellagrini, Roy Partee, Jim Wilson, Al Widmar, Pete Layden, two additional players to be named at a later date and a cash sum estimated to be in excess of \$100,000.

It is a tribute to Stephens' ability as a ball player and as a person that one of his biggest boosters is his former manager at St. Louis, Muddy Ruel. "With all the trials and tribulations we had with the Browns," Ruel has stated, "I can't recall one instance when Stephens wasn't hustling with the same verve as if he were on a pennant-contending club."

His last year with the Browns Junior hit .279 and drove in eighty-three runs. He would have done better in the latter department but for the fact that the weak-hitting Browns seldom had men on base for him to drive in.

"With Stephens it was a matter of pride," Ruel continues. "Regardless of how poorly the club went, he was doing even better than the occasion warranted. That made him an All American in my book."

Purchase of Stephens by the Red Sox presented Manager McCarthy with a delicate problem. Already possessed of one shortstop in Johnny Pesky, it was obvious that either he or Stephens would have to be switched to third base. Junior's naturally easy disposition made the shift of Pesky to third a relatively uncomplicated matter. At his own suggestion he roomed with Pesky and as the new teammates got to know and like one another any natural resentment on Pesky's part at being moved out of his regular position was dissipated.

Perhaps what decided Manager McCarthy in favor of keeping Stephens at short was Junior's powerful throwing arm—an arm that made it possible for him to go deep into the hole to his right and still have time to get the runner at first. An example of this occurred in a game at Fenway Park against the Detroit Tigers in 1948. With men on first and third and one out, batter Dick Wakefield hit a ball sharply through the hole into left field. At the last possible moment, act-

ually as the ball was going behind him, Stephens got to it in some remarkable manner, stopped, and still had power enough to fire a perfect throw to second baseman Bobby Doerr to retire the runner coming down from first. The surprised Doerr's instinctive relay to first doubled up Wakefield in what is still regarded as one of the greatest defensive plays in the history of Fenway Park.

In Doerr's own words, Stephens' ability as a fielder lies in his refusal to give up on a ball. It also lies in his ability to take instruction, even after attaining baseball stardom.

Shortly after he reported to the Red Sox training camp in 1948, Manager McCarthy chided him on a wide throw on an outfield relay that allowed a runner to score. "Don't go so deep to get the relay," Marse Joe told his prize shortstop. "Yours is the throw that has to be accurate. Let the outfielder come to you."

Vern shook his head in wonder and then smiled understandingly. "I've been in baseball ten years and no one has ever told me that," he remarked wonderingly.

But Junior is a player who learns by experience as well as by instruction. Only once, and that was in his minor-league days, did he ever fall victim to the hidden-ball play.

The once puny, under-weight high-school player has developed into a rugged character. In 1948, his first season in Boston, he played every game on the schedule, including the post-season play-off with the



Cleveland Indians. He hit .269 and drove in 137 runs. He had twenty-nine home runs. Note that he bats behind Ted Williams, whom he considers the greatest hitter he has ever seen, then compare his runs-batted-in figures with those of his St. Louis days, and you get some idea of his true team value. You also learn why Boston fans have affectionately named him "Little Slug."

VERNON DEVAUION STEPHENS, JR

Born, McAlister, New Mexico, October 23, 1920.

Bats right. Throws right. Height, 5' 10". Weight, 184 pounds.

Year	Club	League	Pos.	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
1938	Springfield	III	2b-3b	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	3	2	1	.833
1938	Johnstown	M.A.L.	ss	40	136	23	35	15	0	2	13	0	.257	67	109	12	.936
1939	Mayfield	Kitty	ss	122	485	105	175	44	7	30	123	6	.361	184	390	48	.923
1940	San Antonio	T.L.	ss	159	598	60	159	27	6	22	97	3	.266	300	514	64	.927
1941	Toledo	AA	ss	153	616	95	173	33	11	14	74	10	.281	268	453	44	.942
1941	St. Louis	A.L.	ss	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	.500	0	1	1	.500
1942	St. Louis	A.L.	ss	145	575	84	169	26	6	14	92	1	.294	290	415	42	.944
1943	St. Louis	A.L.	of-ss	137	512	75	148	27	3	22	91	3	.289	240	342	34	.945
1944	St. Louis	A.L.	ss	145	559	91	164	32	1	20	109*	2	.293	239	480	35	.954
1945	St. Louis	A.L.	3b-ss	149	571	90	165	27	3	24*	89	2	.289	258	450	30	.959
1946	St. Louis	A.L.	ss	115	450	67	138	19	4	14	64	0	.307	224	343	30	.950
1947	St. Louis*	A.L.	ss	150	562	74	157	18	4	15	83	8	.279	283	494	24	.970
1948	Boston	A.L.	ss	155	635	114	171	25	8	29	137	1	.269	269	540	24	.971

COMPLETE MAJOR LEAGUE TOTALS

8 years	999	3866	595	1113	174	29	138	665	17	.288	1803	3065	220	.957
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WORLD SERIES RECORD

1944	St. Louis	A.L.	ss	6	22	2	5	1	0	0	0	0	.227	9	19	3	.903
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\* Traded to Boston, A.L., with Jack Kramer for Ed Pellagrini, Roy Partee, Jim Wilson, Al Widmar, Pete Layden and two unnamed players, plus cash, November 17.

\* Indicates led lead or was tied for league leadership.

ALL STAR TOTALS

1943	A.L.	ss	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.333	1	3	1	.800
1944	A.L.	ss	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.250	1	0	0	1.000
1946	A.L.	ss	3	1	2	1	0	0	0	2	2	0	.667	0	4	0	1.000
1948	A.L.	ss	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.500	0	0	0	.000

12 1 5 1 0 0 2 .417 2 7 1 .900  
 Outstanding performances: led Kitty League in batting, doubles, total bases, rbi in 1939. Led Texas League in rbi in 1940. Led American League in home runs, 1945 and in fielding, 1945. Led ss in assists, 1947-8. Led Amer. Lea. in errors, 1942, 1948. Tied major league record for most double plays by a shortstop (5) May 5, 1948. Led Amer. Lea. in RBI, 1944.



EWELL DOAK WALKER, JR.

*“All-American Mustang”*





**EWELL DOAK WALKER, JR.**



## CHAPTER XVI

EWELL DOAK WALKER, JR.

"ALL-AMERICAN MUSTANG"

A TWO-YEAR-OLD child toddled across the lawn of his home clutching a regulation-size football in his tiny hands. Twenty years later to the day, before an admiring throng of 69,000 that packed the Cotton Bowl to overflowing, the same boy ran, passed, kicked and generaled the Mustangs of Southern Methodist University to a 21-13 victory over Oregon State.

The story of the years between is one of a father-son relationship the likes of which the sporting world has seldom known—a relationship that extended from home to the father's Sunday school classroom to the athletic field. It is the story of a devoted parent who gazed into the crib where his three-day-old son lay quietly sleeping and promised himself and the boy's mother that someday their child would be an All-American football player. It is a warm tale of good companionship, fine upbringing and the kind of wholesome family life that exemplifies all that is best in the tradition of the American home.

Ewell Doak Walker, Jr., was born January 1, 1927. His father, Ewell, Sr., had enjoyed quite a reputation as a football player. A teacher in the Dallas school



system, he also coached the North Dallas high-school team. Summers he spent as an instructor at boys' camps in Colorado and Missouri. Thus, every summer, from the time he was old enough to walk until he was twelve years old, Doak and the family spent their summers at camp. While Mrs. Walker concerned herself largely with daughter Patricia's happiness and well being, father and son spent hours together tossing or kicking a football. Doak's father taught him the finer points of the game—how to block, tackle, cut, reverse his field and use a straight arm. By the time young Doak was six, he could drop kick a football over Mrs. Walker's clothesline with extraordinary regularity.

The Walker home in Dallas was but a few blocks from the Southern Methodist campus and it wasn't long before little Doaker, as he was known, got in the habit of scampering across the street to watch his favorites at practice. Doak's father advised him to select one particular Mustang player as his idol and then to watch and emulate the player he picked. Doak's choice was Harry Shuford, the team's fullback. He practically lived in the star's shadow, trailing him around the athletic field at SMU, following him into the locker room, even being able, on wonderfully special occasions, to pick up Shuford's helmet when he called for it and hand it to him.

During Doak's year in the fourth grade, his class was asked to write a composition about great men. Each student was allowed to select the particular man he or she wished to write about. Conventional choices

were, of course, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Doak sat down and laboriously scrawled his essay on the subject of "Harry Shuford, the Great Fullback." After reading it, his teacher marked the paper *A*.

The Shuford influence played an even stronger role in moulding Doak's athletic career. For a while Shuford was a counsellor at the boys camp where Doak's father and family spent their summers and when little Doak wasn't swimming or playing tennis or furthering his football education with his father, he could be seen tagging around after his idol.

Shuford's number in football was "37" and when Doak began playing sandlot football with the kids in the neighborhood, nothing would suffice but for his mother to sew a "37" on his own jersey. Mrs. Walker returned from the store empty-handed. They were out of "37"s, but perhaps some other number would do just as well? Doak shook his head. As far as he was concerned, it was "37" or nothing.

Today, of course, "37" is famous as the number worn by All-American Doak Walker of Southern Methodist. There's a rather neat conclusion to the story, too. Nowadays when Doak and his teammates practice on the field where he used to follow Harry Shuford around, a little brown-eyed kid tags along in Doak's shadow with the same hero-worship in his eyes. The youngster is Harry Shuford, Jr.

Clean living habits were instilled in Doak at an early age. Until his school studies demanded night home-

work, he was in bed by eight o'clock every evening. Today he neither smokes nor drinks. Testimony to the manner in which Mr. and Mrs. Walker brought up their son is seen from the fact that, in spite of the countless honors and attending publicity that have come Doak's way, he is one of the most popular men on the SMU squad.

Doak's athletic career first blossomed at Highland Park High School in Dallas. During his years there he won more sport letters and team captaincies than had ever before been awarded in the school's history. In his senior year he won letters in football, baseball, basketball, track and swimming.

In high school Doak struck up a friendship with another pretty fair athlete named Layne—the same Bobby Layne who went on to All-American honors at the University of Texas and who is now a professional star with the Chicago Bears of the National Football League.

In 1943 Walker and Layne were co-captains of the Highland Park football team, but after Bobby's senior year, their paths separated. Layne, a year ahead of Walker, went off to the University of Texas while Doak finished out his high-school career. Then, in 1945, after winning practically every honor his school could bestow, Doak joined the Merchant Marine. That was in January.

He served in the U.S. Maritime Service until the following October, at which time he was given his honorable discharge. Now, once again, his thoughts

were free to dwell on more intriguing subjects such as football and the college education he and his father had planned.

Doak and Bobby Layne had been reunited in the Maritime Service and when the time came to think of school again it was only natural that Bobby should try to sell his friend and ex-teammate on the advantages of returning with him to the University of Texas. Doak was undecided whether to go to Texas or to enroll at Southern Methodist, the university of his childhood hero, Harry Shuford.

As it happened, Doak and Bobby received their discharges from the Merchant Marine the same October day. They were in New Orleans, it was a Saturday, so what was more natural than that the two footloose civilians take in that afternoon's football game between Tulane and Southern Methodist? Evidently they picked a bad day for the Mustangs looked like anything but the team with which young Doak someday dreamed of playing. On their way out of the darkening stadium, Doak told Bobby he'd made up his mind. He was going to Texas.

In town that day to scout the Southern Methodist team was Blair Cherry, the Texas coach. At Layne's suggestion the two friends went off to his hotel. When they got there they found that Cherry had checked out a short time ago. There was nothing for them to do but go home to Dallas.

Fate, which had just turned her darkest frown on University of Texas football destiny for the next four

years, now smiled on Coach Matty Bell and the Mustangs of SMU. Walker and Layne caught a ride back to Dallas with the Southern Methodist team and on the long ride home Doak received whatever final persuasion he needed to enroll at his home-town university.

The nation was still in the throes of wartime football in the fall of 1945 and Walker was welcomed with open arms by the coaching staff when he officially became an SMU undergraduate in November. More than half the season had passed and the Mustangs had already lost four of the six games they had played. Walker joined the team as a freshman and within less than a week had transformed the previously ineffectual Mustangs into a team which in its last three games proved to be the star of the Southwestern Conference.

Doak played in the five remaining games on the Mustangs' schedule, of which SMU won three while losing the other two. He ran twenty-nine yards against Texas and his old friend Bobby Layne for the Mustangs' only touchdown of the game, and although his team lost, 12-7, it was Walker's passing, punting, running and defensive play that kept the Mustangs ahead until two fourth-period touchdown passes gave the Longhorns the victory.

Against the Texas Aggies, to whom SMU bowed by a 3-0 score, he made ten first downs to the two made by Texas A & M, completed thirteen of nineteen passes and on at least one occasion saved sure touchdowns with accurate tackles.

With Doak at the helm, the Mustangs rolled over Arkansas, 21-0 and then piled up twenty-seven points in the first quarter against Baylor. The reserves finished out the latter half of that game which was won by Southern Methodist, 34-0. Arch rival Texas Christian felt the force of the Mustangs' kick, 34-0.

Although he was only a freshman and had played in but one month of the 1945 season, Doak was named to the All-Conference team and was given honorable mention for the All-America eleven. His play was such that he was picked to play in the East-West game in which, on his nineteenth birthday, he threw the tying touchdown pass.

The estimation in which he was held at SMU is seen from the fact that he was selected as that year's King of the Campus—the most popular male student.

Doak was in the Army during the 1946 collegiate season. Drafted in February, he managed to keep a hand in the game by playing with the Brooke Army Medical Center Comets. During their ten-game season, he scored 134 points. The following year he was back in uniform at Southern Methodist, playing the entire schedule and scoring most of his team's points—most touchdowns, most points after touchdown, most field goals and greatest number of yards gained by rushing, on punt returns and on kickoff returns.

He ranked fifteenth among the nation's leaders in total offense with 997 yards gained on 215 plays in ten games. He was thirteenth in rushing, compiling an average of 4.01 yards per carry. He was named to the

## 310 FAMOUS AMERICAN ATHLETES

Associated Press All-American and to the Saturday Evening Post All-American, the latter team picked by the American Football Coaches Association.

Doak showed friends that he was rid of so-called Army legs when in the opening game of the 1947 season against Santa Clara he ran back a kickoff ninety-six yards for a touchdown and scored twice more.

The local press summarized his play against Missouri in the following words:

Magnificent Doak Walker was the Blue Ribbon exhibit on State Fair's opening night, running like an unbroken stallion to bring an impressive SMU a 35-19 winner (over Missouri) in an offensive classic. The shy, sophomore candidate for All-America recognition returned a punt 76 yards for a touchdown, scored again from the 2-yard line after leading a 63-yard sustained drive, and passed to Howard Parker for a third marker. Then, with the score 21-19 in SMU's favor, Walker took off on what looked like a small gain at right end. Suddenly he stopped, pivoted, and drew out of a trap. Like a lightning shaft he cut to his left in the Missouri secondary and started one of the most brilliant runs the old Cotton Bowl has ever seen. He reached midfield in a swarm of Missourians, cut straight across the 50-yard stripe for 30 yards, and then made his move down the sidelines. The Missouri posse raced at his heels, and he was out there alone with no

blockers around. Finally fleet Lloyd Brinkman elbowed him out of bounds on the Missouri 20-yard line after a 57-yard gain.

On the following play Walker handed off to Ed Green for a touchdown.

But Walker was no one-way football player—good enough only for the two-platoon style of play that had begun to enjoy widespread popularity at West Point and Ann Arbor and other institutions blessed with a numerical wealth of grid talent. The boyhood lessons learned from his father during camp summers in Colorado bore fruit in Doak's all-around play. In addition to his unquestioned talents as a runner, passer and defensive player, he is one of the best kickers in the game—probably more adept at the seldom-used offensive and defensive weapon, the quick kick, than almost anyone else. For example, in the 1947 game against Oklahoma A & M, won by Southern Methodist, 21-14, he quick-kicked sixty-one yards. In the 1949 Cotton Bowl Game against Oregon State he quick-kicked eighty yards, rolling the ball out of bounds on the Webfoot six-inch line.

He kicked points after touchdown and field goals. His two conversions won the all-important Texas game, 14-13. Against Baylor he broke a scoreless tie by kicking a nineteen-yard field goal. SMU won the game, 10-0. In the 19-19 tie with TCU he ran sixty-one yards for one touchdown and passed to Sid Halliday for the tying score with but twenty seconds remaining



in the game. In the game that gave SMU an unbeaten season and a shot at the Cotton Bowl, Walker completed ten of fourteen passes for 136 yards, returned three punts for fifty-three yards, three kick-offs for 163 yards, and made 119 yards from scrimmage. His personal yards-gained total for the day was 471.

He wound up the season on his birthday in the Cotton Bowl, throwing a forty-yard pass to Paul Page for one Mustang touchdown and then scoring another himself as SMU and Penn State fought to a 13-13 tie. After the game, he was one of the first men to congratulate the Easterners in their dressing room.

Doak improved as a player during the 1948 season, as a glance at his personal statistics will indicate. In the words of an opposing coach, "He did everything but anticipate opponents' fumbles." Among Bowl game players, he ranked thirteenth nationally in total offense with 855 yards on 156 plays in ten games. He was responsible for seventeen touchdowns (either scoring them himself or passing for them). Although that year teammate Gil Johnson wound up doing most of the SMU passing, Walker did enough to rank tenth nationally in that department. In ten games he completed forty-one passes out of eighty-five attempted and had but two intercepted. Three of the total which accounted for 616 yards, went for touchdowns. Incidentally, Gil Johnson ranked third among the nation's passers, thus giving Matty Bell's team probably the best 1-2 passing punch in the modern history of the game.

In punting Walker ranked second nationally with 27 kicks good for an average of 41.4 yards, being exceeded only by Charley Justice's top figure of 44 yards.

The perseverance Doak carries with him onto the football field manifested itself early in his life. Usually Doak was a model son. In fact on only one occasion can his parents remember his giving them any trouble. That time occurred in Doak's tenth year. Sent on an errand to the grocery store nearby, little Doak was over an hour late in returning. He was accordingly punished for his dillydallying by not being allowed to play outside.

Several days later he walked into the house carrying a new pair of tennis shoes which he explained he had gotten by successfully determining the number of spots on a leopard's skin on display in a store window near the grocer's. When Mrs. Walker asked why it had taken him an hour to guess the number of spots, Doak shook his head. He hadn't guessed at the number, he told her solemnly. He had counted them!

Walker's popularity in and around Dallas has grown to almost Bunyanesque proportions. Principal reason for this, aside from the following he attracts by his athletic prowess, are the youngsters he wins over at his not infrequent talks before boys' clubs and church organizations. Not so long ago the local Lions Club voted him Dallas' number-one citizen. His use of the number "37" on his jersey has caused a serious merchandising problem among Dallas shop keepers. Just as young Doak would have no number but the "37"

carried by his idol Harry Shuford, so today the youngsters of Dallas will have nothing but the "37" worn by their "Mr. Doaker." During the 1947 and 1948 seasons it was not at all an unusual sight to see two teams of kids going at a game of football on any one of the parks and playgrounds in and around Dallas. The only unusual thing was that like as not every player, be he lineman or back, would be wearing a "37" on his jersey.

The year 1948 was unquestionably the best in Doak Walker's career. (At the time this volume went to press, he was preparing for the 1949 intercollegiate season). As in 1947, he was picked on practically every All-American team. He received the John W. Heisman award as the outstanding college football player of 1948. The previous year he had been given the Maxwell award as that season's outstanding college player. He was given the *Sport Magazine* award as the outstanding player of 1948. He was presented the *Detroit Times* award as the outstanding player of 1948. He was given the Williamson All-America 1948 Most Valuable Player award. He was Southwestern nominee for the 1948 Sullivan award, annually presented the nation's outstanding amateur athlete. In 1948 the winner was Bob Mathias, the Tulare, California schoolboy who won the decathlon event at the Olympic track and field competition in England.

Other honors came his way. He was named to the all-conference baseball team in 1948 and the preceding year was voted the outstanding sportsman among opponents of Oklahoma A & M.

Although weighing in the neighborhood of 175 pounds, Walker punishes himself unsparingly during the football season.—In 1947 he averaged better than fifty-six minutes per game—and saw his weight drop at the season's close to 160 pounds. He has taken beatings on the football field that would break the spirit of many players. Yet Doak always grins and bounces back for more. He has been praised by his coach and those near him for the fine example he sets the youth of this country.

Anxious as was Doak's father for his son to have a successful athletic, and in particular, football career, his constant advice to Doak was to quit the game the minute it ceased to be fun. That's the advice Doak now gives youngsters to whom he speaks. He imparts other clean habits to them. In an article in the March, 1949 edition of *Allied Youth*, Walker is quoted as follows:

Last fall when the Southern Methodist University Mustangs became the first team to win the Southwest Conference football championship two years in succession during peacetime, several of us played fifty or more minutes in many of the more important games. I do not believe we could have done this had it not been that all of us trained conscientiously, leaving liquor entirely alone.

In several of our games it was necessary for us to play our best ball in the last few minutes of the contest, and the fact that we did not drink helped

us to make the quick decisions that decide between victory and defeat.

One of the few injuries that interrupted Doak's playing career came during the 1948 season. Yet such was Walker's caliber that he made use of this adversity to confuse and confound the opposition. His knee was injured in the first period of the game with Arkansas. Even so, Doak returned to action in the second period and led the Mustangs to a 14-12 victory, his two conversions spelling the margin between the teams. He continued to play brilliantly, gaining eighty-one yards against Baylor, or more than the total gained by the entire Bear team, in the Mustangs' 13-6 victory.

It was in the Texas Christian game, however, that Walker's field generalship best stood out. Forced to miss practice all week because of his injured leg, Walker's importance to the team was such that a last-minute decision was made to allow him to play. Although limited to twenty-five yards gained in nine tries, Walker was able to punt eight times for an excellent 44.3 average. Late in the game his true value stood out. Rushed into the line-up, he served as a decoy on a play that saw Gil Johnson pass to Milam for a touchdown while practically the entire TCU team kept its eyes glued on Doak. He then kicked the point after touchdown that tied the score at 7-7.

Pass catches by Walker figured heavily in the victories over Missouri and Rice. In the Missouri game he

made a miraculous, leaping catch on the three-yard line, subsequently going over for the score. Against Rice he caught a pass from Gil Johnson for forty-six yards and a touchdown, first faking the defensive back beautifully out of position.

Walker's ability as a runner comes from shiftiness and an amazing ability to change direction swiftly rather than from overpowering drive or sheer speed. He has neither the straight-ahead power of Dick McKissack nor the blinding speed of Kyle Rote, yet he is probably harder to stop than these teammates. He runs with an easy, loping gate—close to the ground. His change of pace is remarkable.

Although limited by Oregon State's magnificent line to nine yards as his longest run of the day, Walker was outstanding in the 1949 Cotton Bowl game. Five minutes after the opening kickoff, SMU had seven points when Walker capped a fifty-nine yard drive with a one-yard plunge and then kicked the point after touchdown. Only two passes figured in the sustained march. That was the only score of the first half.

Following the second-half kickoff, the Mustangs drove eighty yards for their second score, this time not even bothering to mix in one pass. Kyle Rote tallied on a twisting run of thirty-five yards and again Doak Walker converted. Then, after Oregon had driven seventy-two yards for its first score early in the final period, Walker engineered a final touchdown drive of fifty-six yards. This time Gene Roberts went over. Then occurred an incident that is typical of the sports-

manship and consideration of this great All-American. Realizing that the game was Co-Captain Joe Ethridge's last at Southern Methodist, Walker asked permission to remove himself from the line-up in order that Ethridge might make the point after touchdown. Before the final gun sounded, Oregon State battled back for one more touchdown to make the final score SMU 21, OSC 13.

Walker gained sixty-six yards rushing for an average carry of 4.7 and completed six of ten passes for another seventy-nine yards. This accounted for 145 yards of the SMU total of 337. Yet these figures in no way represented Doak's major contribution to the Mustang victory. Writing in the *Sporting News*, reporter George White said in part:

Aside from the inability of receivers to hold passes, the thing that hurt Oregon most was Walker's alert strategy. He didn't miss a trick. He mixed his plays beautifully, passes, runs, fakes, reverses, fake handoffs and straight power drives. In the second quarter alone he killed any chance the Webfoots had to score in the first half by calling for two quick kicks which were perfectly executed to cost the invaders ninety-five yards they already had gained.

Team player and All-American both on and off the field, Doak Walker intends to carry on in athletics after graduation from SMU. A physical-education

major, he hopes to play a few seasons of professional football. Then he wants to coach.

### EWELL DOAK WALKER, JR.

Born, January 1, 1927, in Dallas, Texas.

#### COLLEGE RECORD

	1945	1947*	1948*	Total
Games.....	5	10	10	25
Times carried ball.....	68	163	108	339
Yards gained rushing.....	367	765	553	1685
Yards lost rushing.....	78	81	10	169
Net gain rushing.....	289	684	543	1516
Forward passes thrown.....	65	51	85	201
Passes completed.....	38	29	41	108
Passes intercepted.....	4	3	2	9
Net gain passing.....	387	342	616	1345
Passes caught.....	2	8	14	24
Yards gained passes caught.....	32	132	271	435
Number of punts.....	11	11	27	49
Average distance of punts.....	31.3	34.3	41.4	35.7
Punt returns.....	15	20	10	45
Yards punt returns.....	238	256	170	664
Touchdowns.....	5	11	11	27
Points after touchdown.....	0	18	22	40
Field goals.....	0	1	0	1
Total points scored.....	30	87	88	205

\* Exclusive of Cotton Bowl Game.

Selected on practically every major All-American team in 1947 and 1948. Given Maxwell award as outstanding football player of college rank in 1947. Given John W. Heisman award as outstanding college football player of 1948. Given *Sport Magazine* award as outstanding player (college) in 1948. Given *Detroit Times* award as outstanding college player in 1948. Given Williamson All-America 1948 Most Valuable Player award—all ranks. Named on All-Conference baseball team in 1948. Southwestern AAU nominee for Sullivan award in 1948.





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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT  
ATHLETES PRESENTED IN PREVIOUS  
VOLUMES**

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## CHAPTER XVII

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT ATHLETES  
PRESENTED IN PREVIOUS VOLUMES

### EDDIE ARCARO

(Ninth Series—By Gordon Campbell)

**E**DDIE ARCARO was undoubtedly 1948's jockey of the year. For the second time in his career he rode a triple-crown winner to victories in the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness and the Belmont. Whirlaway was the horse in 1941. In 1948 it was Calumet Farms' Citation.

Citation's victory in the Derby made Arcaro the only jockey ever to ride four Kentucky Derby winners. He began with Lawrin in 1938, continued with Whirlaway in 1941 and then added Hoop, Jr., in 1945.

Arcaro's triumph in the 1948 Derby came as a consequence of the tragic death of jockey Al Snider in a fishing mishap off the Florida Keys. Snider had originally been given Citation as his Derby mount. Before agreeing to ride as Snider's substitute, Arcaro demanded that in the event of a Derby triumph, half his purse be sent to Snider's widow.

## LOU BOUDREAU

(Ninth Series—By Gordon Campbell)

Prior to the start of the 1948 major-league season, Cleveland head man Bill Veeck made repeated, albeit unsuccessful, efforts to trade Lou Boudreau, his star shortstop. When news of the attempted trade of the popular infielder became known, Cleveland citizens and Indian fans unloosed such a flood of vocal abuse about Veeck's ears that the energetic club president finally gave up in his attempts to sell Boudreau. Later, as Boudreau personally led the Indians to win the pennant, Veeck had occasion to characterize the hastily called-off trade as the "best deal I have ever made."

All Boudreau did during Cleveland's drive to the flag was lead American League shortstops in fielding, hit .355, drive in 107 runs and field a sparkling .970. In recognition of his play he was named the American League's Most Valuable Player of the Year.

Throughout the season it was the inspirational Tribe leader who time after time broke up games with his timely hitting or saved them with his equally timely fielding. Playing on a pair of weakened ankles which he personally taped before each game, Boudreau drove himself through 152 games of the 1948 season, including the famous play-off game for the pennant with the Boston Red Sox.

That game, perhaps more than any other single one, demonstrated Boudreau's remarkable ability to come through when the chips were down. In the first inning,

hardly before the thousands in the stands had had a chance to take their seats, the Cleveland manager homered to put his team ahead. Before the afternoon was over he added another home run and a double to his total as he led the Indians to a surprisingly easy conquest of the Red Sox, 8-3.

He continued his brilliant play in the World Series with the Boston Braves, tying a record for fielding by a World Series shortstop with a flawless performance. In the six-game series he accepted twenty-five chances without an error and batted .273.

During the regular season he again repeated as All Star American League shortstop. Without doubt he was Cleveland's man of the year, the principal reason for the Indians' regular-season as well as World Series success.

LOU BOUDREAU'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
Cleveland	AL	152	560	116	199	34	6	18	107	.355	331	489	25	.970

1948 WORLD SERIES RECORD

Cleveland	AL	6	22	1	6	4	0	0		.273	11	14	0	1.000
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HARRY BRECHEEN

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

"Harry the Cat" Brecheen, brilliant southpaw of the St. Louis Cardinals, had his finest major-league year in 1948 when he won twenty games while losing but

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seven. He led National League pitchers in shut-outs, strike-outs and in earned-run-average.

In 233 innings he allowed but 193 hits and fifty-eight earned runs. His control was near-perfect as he struck out 149 while issuing but forty-nine bases on balls.

### HARRY BRECHEN'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	IP	W	L	Pct.	H	R	ER	SO	BB	ERA
St. Louis	NL	33	233	20	7	.741	193	62	58	149	49	2.24

## FRANK BRIMSEK

(Eighth Series—By Harold Kaese and others)

Frank Brimsek, Boston Bruins goalie, was a member of the National Hockey League All Star team for the 1947-'48 season. In sixty games over the course of the regular season, Brimsek allowed 168 goals for a per-game average of 2.82. He had three shut-outs.

In five play-off games against Toronto he allowed twenty goals.

During the 1948-'49 season Brimsek took part in fifty-four games during which he allowed 147 goals for a per-game average of 2.72. He had but one shut-out.

In five Stanley Cup play-off games against the Toronto Maple Leafs, Brimsek allowed sixteen goals.

## THE COOPER BROTHERS

(Ninth Series—By Gordon Campbell)

The year 1948 saw the end of pitcher Mort Cooper's National League career. Released by the New York

Giants, Cooper got himself into financial straits from which he was assisted by the kindly intervention of Cardinal boss Sam Breadon. Grossly overweight during his Giant days, Cooper worked hard to get himself in shape for a tryout with the Chicago Cubs, also arranged by Breadon. Unfortunately for Mort, the will to win and make good wasn't enough. Sent into a game with Brooklyn early in 1949, Cooper was hit hard and often and almost immediately thereafter was given his unconditional release.

Brother Walker too had troubles during 1948, his being of a purely physical nature. Although out of action from May 8 to June 15 because of a knee operation, the big catcher nevertheless took part in ninety-one games and was again a member of the National League All Star team.

On June 13, 1949, Cooper was traded to Cincinnati for catcher Ray Mueller.

WALKER COOPER'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
New York	NL	91	290	40	77	12	0	16	54	.266	307	21	7	.979

DOM DiMAGGIO

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

In 1948 Joe's little brother wrote his name into the baseball record books for put-outs and total chances. He was also the American League leader in at-bats. He continued to thrill American League onlookers



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with his excellent defensive play. His extra base hitting showed a sharp increase from the preceding year when he cracked out forty doubles in comparison with nineteen hit during the 1947 season.

Following the 1948 season he was married to Miss Emily Frederick of Wellesley Hills, Mass.

### DOM DiMAGGIO'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
Boston	AL	155	648	127	185	40	4	9	87	.285	503	13	10	.981

## JOE DiMAGGIO

(Fifth Series—By LeRoy Atkinson and others)

Like teammate Charley Keller, 1948 was unfortunately another "injury" year for the famed "Yankee Clipper." Selected the American League's Most Valuable Player in 1947 (for the third time), the big fellow capped his 1947 performance by playing in the All Star game and the World Series with the Brooklyn Dodgers. He hit two home runs in the Yankee Series triumph and was very probably robbed of another by Al Gionfriddo's miraculous catch in deep leftfield at Yankee Stadium.

Again an All Star in 1948, the big fellow gamely limped through practically the entire season. With the Yankees in pennant contention until the final days of the campaign, DiMaggio played every day despite an assortment of painful injuries that would have benched a less courageous individual. Although limping from

severe charley horses and a painful bone growth in his left heel, the "Yankee Clipper" managed to appear in 153 games.

Two of his more notable achievements for the year occurred at Boston's Fenway Park. In one game of a crucial September series with the Red Sox, DiMaggio came to the plate with the bases loaded in the tenth inning of a tie-game. He hit a towering drive off relief pitcher Earl Caldwell that just curved foul as it soared over the wall in leftfield. Several pitches later he made certain of his home run, driving a mighty line drive over brother Dominic's head into the bleachers in dead centerfield to win the game.

On another occasion in Boston, and with his legs painig him so that every running step was an ordeal, he collected four hits in a game as a hostile Boston crowd cheered his courageous performance. Brother Dominic hailed the tribute as one of his own biggest baseball thrills.

JOE DiMAGGIO'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
New York	AL	153	594	110	190	26	11	39	155	.320	441	8	13	.972

GIL DODDS

(Ninth Series—By Gordon Campbell)

The Flying Parson continued as undisputed United States mile king during the 1947-'48 indoor track season. He won the mile at the Millrose Games in New York in 4:05.3, the Boston Knights of Columbus mile

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in 4:08.4 and the Boston BAA mile in 4:08.1. His 4:05.3 clocking at Madison Square Garden was the fastest mile ever run in competition by an American.

In 95° heat Dodds won the 1,500-meter race to qualify for the Olympic tryouts at Evanston, Ill. But despite his unquestioned superiority in all distances from 1,000 yards to three miles (and with thirty-five straight victories in the foregoing distances to his credit), Dodds was denied the honor of competing in the Olympic Games. Competing as a favor in a relatively small and unimportant Greater Boston meet, Dodds injured an Achilles tendon severely enough to prevent his participation in the required Olympic tryouts. Thus America's greatest distance star missed the Olympics boat.

In November of 1948 Dodds announced his retirement from competition to coach track at his alma mater, Wheaton College.

### BOBBY DOERR

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

Playing his eleventh year of major-league baseball, Boston's popular field captain was a vital cog in the Red Sox' stirring September drive that fell but one game short of projecting them into an all-Boston World Series with the National League pennant-winning Braves. Over ten games out of first place by mid-season, the Red Sox closed with a rush that found them deadlocked with the Cleveland Indians on the last day

of the 1948 season. Cleveland won the unprecedented American League play-off to enter the Series.

Despite gradually increasing slowness afield, Doerr continued to wield a dangerous bat. He upped his 1947 average some twenty-seven points, drove in more runs and hit more home runs. This, despite the fact that he played in fewer games.

He was again a member of the American League's All Star team.

In 1948 Doerr set an American League record by accepting 404 chances (177 put-outs, 227 assists) without an error. He did this from June 24 to September 19. He also established a major-league record for second basemen by going seventy-three games without an error.

## BOBBY DOERR'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
Boston	AL	140	527	94	150	23	6	27	111	.285	366	430	6	.993

## BILL DURNAN

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

During the 1947-'48 National Hockey League season, Montreal goalie Bill Durnan took part in fifty-nine games, during which he totaled five shut-outs. His per-game average was 2.74 and his total goals allowed was 162.

In 1948-'49, Durnan played in sixty games during which he held the opposition to 126 goals for a per-

game average of 2.10. He had ten shut-outs for the season.

He allowed seventeen goals in the seven-game Stanley Cup play-off series with the Detroit Red Wings.

### BOB FELLER

(Seventh Series—Jerry Nason and others)

The Cleveland pitching star was, among other things, 1947's American League leader in innings pitched, games won and strike-outs. He tied for the lead in strike-outs. In 1948 he led American League pitchers in base hits allowed.

That year Feller took part in forty-four games. He started and relieved as the Indians fought their way to a pennant. Although he fell below the charmed twenty-game figure for victories and was accordingly regarded as having had a "poor" season, Feller managed to win nineteen games while losing fifteen. Tribute to him may be realized from criticism which labeled a nineteen-game victory season as a poor year.

Holder of practically every pitching record in the book, Feller finally fulfilled a lifetime ambition by pitching in a World Series. He and Johnny Sain of the Braves were the opposing hurlers in what was undoubtedly one of the best-pitched opening games of any World Series. For inning after inning each turned back the opposition until, in the Boston ninth, outfielder Tommy Holmes singled cleanly to left to drive

in the only run of the game. Losing pitcher Feller allowed but two hits.

Bob's second, and losing, World Series appearance came in the fifth game which was played in Cleveland. There he was rocked for successive home runs by Boston third baseman Bob Elliott as the Braves won, 11-5.

BOB FELLER'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	IP	W	L	Pct.	H	R	ER	SO	BB	ERA
Cleveland	AL	44	280	19	15	.559	255	123	111	164	116	3.57

1948 WORLD SERIES RECORD

Cleveland	AL	2	14 $\frac{1}{2}$	0	2	.000	10	8	8	7	5	5.02
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DAVE FERRISS

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

Ferriss' successively disappointing seasons after his brilliant 1945 freshman year, led many observers to the conclusion that perhaps, after all, the tall Mississippian was in reality "just another wartime player." With a 1945 earned-run average of 2.95 and a World Series victory to show in 1946, Ferriss slumped badly in 1947 when he posted a record of but twelve wins and eleven losses. In contrast with the war years, his ERA jumped to 4.06.

During the 1948 campaign Manager McCarthy relegated Ferriss mostly to bullpen duty. Still troubled with his asthmatic condition, the willing pitcher managed to win seven games while dropping but three. In

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115 innings he permitted 127 base hits, struck out thirty and allowed sixty-one bases on balls. His ERA continued to rise, reaching a seasonal mark of 5.24.

### DAVE FERRISS'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	IP	W	L	Pct.	H	R	ER	SO	BB	ERA
Boston	AL	31	115	7	3	.700	127	71	67	30	61	5.24

## JOHNNY HOPP

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

Johnny Hopp, the man around whom Manager Billy Southworth was going to build his Boston Braves team, figured in two trades in as many years in the National League. On November 18, 1947, he was sent to Pittsburgh with infielder Danny Murtaugh for outfielder Jim Russell, catcher Bill Salkeld and pitcher Al Lyons. In May of 1949 he was traded to the Brooklyn Dodgers for sore-arm outfielder Marv Rackley. Several weeks later, when Pirate officials expressed their dissatisfaction with the condition of Rackley's arm, Dodger magnate Branch Rickey offered to call off the player exchange. The Pirates accepted and the two outfielders returned to their respective clubs.

With the Pirates in 1948, Hopp divided his time between first base and the outfield. He appeared in 120 games in which he drove in thirty-one runs and batted .278. He became a ten-year National League player with the close of the 1948 season.

### JOHNNY HOPP'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
Pittsburgh	NL	120	392	64	109	15	12	1	31	.278	403	21	1	.998

## CHARLEY KELLER

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

Following the 1946 campaign, during which he hit thirty home runs and drove in 101 runs, Keller missed most of the 1947 season with a back injury. His last appearance came as a pinch hitter as early as June 23. That year he took part in but forty-five games, batting .238. He missed almost two months of the 1948 season, being out of action from June 2 to July 22 with a fractured bone in his left hand.

## CHARLEY KELLER'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
New York	AL	83	247	41	66	15	2	6	44	.267	126	1	3	.977

## JOE LOUIS

(Sixth Series—By Harold Kaese)

In 1948 Joe Louis successfully defended his heavy-weight title for the twenty-fifth time. On June 20 at Yankee Stadium he met Joe Walcott in a return bout which, for the first ten rounds, gave every indication of being a repetition of their 1947 bicycle race.

As in the earlier match, Walcott began retreating from the champion at the bell. In the third round he dropped Louis for a count of one, almost immediately thereafter retiring into his shell. Round succeeded round as Louis stalked the retreating challenger. The crowd, impatient at the lack of action, booed both fighters repeatedly. Finally, in the eleventh round, the



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champion caught up with his man. A brief flurry of punches thrown by Louis deposited Walcott on the canvas where he was counted out by Referee Frank Fullam.

After the fight Louis made several conflicting announcements regarding his permanent retirement. After apparently wavering on his decision in the following months, Louis made the retirement stick by entering the fight promotion business early in 1949.

### MARTY MARION

(Ninth Series—By Gordon Campbell)

The great St. Louis Cardinal shortstop led the National League in 1947 in putouts, double plays and fielding. He also led in 1948 in fielding. He was a member of the National League All Star team in 1947.

Bothered somewhat by a back injury during the 1948 season, Marion's hitting showed an appreciable slacking off from his 1947 figures. He still managed to get into 144 games, collecting twenty-six doubles and driving in forty-three runs. In the field he was the same mechanical marvel, ranging far afield to stop practically everything hit into his vicinity.

#### MARTY MARION'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
St. Louis	NL	144	567	70	143	26	4	4	43	.252	263	445	19	.974

## STAN MUSIAL

[(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

The great St. Louis Cardinal star continued to write his name into baseball record books during the 1948 season. That year, among other things, he led the National League in batting, in total bases, in doubles, triples, runs, runs-batted-in and in slugging percentage. He tied a National League record by leading the league in base hits for the fourth time and tied another National League record by leading the league in triples for the third time. He tied a major-league record by making five hits in one game on four different occasions. He was selected as the National League's Most Valuable Player, the third time he had won the honor.

He was again a member of the National League All Star team.

## MUSIAL'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
St. Louis	NL	155	611	135	230	46	18	39	131	.376	354	11	7	.981

## HERB MCKENLEY

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

Herb McKenley's major accomplishments in 1948 were two world-record-breaking performances. In the National AAU meet at Milwaukee in July, running in the 400-meters on Marquette University's track, McKenley clipped one-tenth of a second off the world mark established in 1939 by Rudolph Harbig, Ger-

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many and equalled two years later by Grover Klemmer of the San Francisco Olympic Club. In no way aided by a brisk wind which blew directly across the track, McKenley covered the distance in 0:45.9.

One month earlier, in the Pacific Association AAU meet at Berkeley, California, he clipped  $\frac{3}{10}$  of a second from his own 440-yard record as he did the quarter in forty-six seconds.

Running in the Olympic Games in England, McKenley finished fourth in the 200-meters behind Mel Patton and Barney Ewell of the United States and Lloyd LaBeach of Panama. He was second to teammate Arthur Wint in the 400-meter run.

During the indoor American season, McKenley won the "Buermeyer 500" at the NYAC meet in 57.3 and finished fourth in the 600-yard run at the National AAU meet in New York.

## HAL NEWHOUSER

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

Detroit's brilliant lefthander was the American League's leading game winner in 1948. The same year he tied a major-league record by starting four double plays in a single game (May 19, 1948). He was again a member of the American League All Star team, this time appearing in the role of pinch runner.

Newhouser's pitching showed improvement from the preceding year during which he had led American League pitchers in base hits allowed. He allowed the

identical number of earned runs and, working thirteen less innings than in 1947, struck out and walked fewer opposing hitters.

HAL NEWHOUSER'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	IP	W	L	Pct.	H	R	ER	SO	BB	ERA
Detroit	AL	39	272	21	12	.636	249	109	91	143	99	3.01

BILL NICHOLSON

(Ninth Series—By Gordon Campbell)

After leading the National League in strike-outs and Senior Circuit outfielders in fielding in 1947, Nicholson was traded by the Chicago Cubs to the Philadelphia Phillies for outfielder Harry Walker. The transaction was made October 4, 1948.

Bothered by the shirt-sleeved hitting background in Chicago's Wrigley Field, the Cub rightfielder continued to have his troubles at the plate. Although his 1948 batting average of .261 represented a definite improvement over his 1947 mark of .244 Nicholson failed to impress his Chicago employers who had stuck with him more or less patiently through a protracted two-season hitting slump.

Nicholson had employed almost every device to regain his pre-war slugging form. He changed his batting stance, studied movies of himself to correct a definite hitch in his swing, all to no avail. Baseball experts felt that the change of scenery in Philadelphia would benefit the burly outfielder more than all the well-meant

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advice to which he had so patiently and so fruitlessly listened.

### BILL NICHOLSON'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
Chicago	NL	143	494	68	129	24	5	19	67	.261	244	7	5	.980

### PEE WEE REESE

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

Brooklyn's field leader and first citizen, while not quite matching his World Series season batting average of the previous year, nevertheless continued to set records in 1948. He led National League shortstops in total put-outs and in double plays. He was again selected for the National League All Star team and, while hitless in two appearances at the plate, fielded his position flawlessly.

He again played in practically every Dodger game and was the key man in Brooklyn's infield. He handled far more chances than in 1947, making more put-outs, more errors and collecting more assists.

### PEE WEE REESE'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
Brooklyn	NL	151	566	96	155	31	4	9	75	.274	335	453	31	.962

### BOBBY RIGGS

(Seventh Series—Jerry Nason and others)

In 1948 Bobby Riggs was ranked as the world's No. 2 professional tennis player by the Professional Lawn

Tennis Association. Kramer dethroned Riggs as world's professional champion with a 14-12, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 triumph at the West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills.

Kramer and Francisco Segura teamed to win the doubles crown from Riggs and Don Budge, 4-6, 5-7, 6-2, 7-5, 8-6.

In December of 1947 Kramer and Riggs embarked on a nationwide tour, along with Segura and former Australian star Dinny Pails. Riggs won the opening singles match from Kramer on Christmas Eve and managed to keep honors even through the first thirty matches they played. Thereafter, Kramer's margin of superiority climbed until it was out of all proportion.

While a financial success to Riggs, the tour was definitely not a competitive success for the one-time U.S. champion.

## GEORGE HERMAN RUTH

February 6, 1895—August 16, 1948

(First Series—Charles H. L. Johnston)

On the night of August 16, 1948, Babe Ruth succumbed to a lengthy illness. He was mourned by thousands who came to Yankee Stadium to pay their last respects and by countless millions throughout the world.

During his final years Ruth took an active part and interest in the development of athletics for juveniles. His active playing career included six years with the

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Boston Red Sox and fifteen with the New York Yankees. At the time of his death he left sixty-two major-league records behind him.

### ENOS SLAUGHTER

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

"Country" Slaughter had perhaps his best year in baseball in 1948. Playing in 146 games, he reached a (for him) all-time high batting mark of .321 while fielding .971. Once again his powerful throwing arm made itself felt throughout the National League as he was credited with nine assists.

Slaughter was the victim of as freak an accident as has ever occurred in baseball. Running from first to second on a run-and-hit play during a game at Braves Field, batter Nippy Jones' vicious line-drive toward rightfield struck the full-running Slaughter squarely in the facial pocket formed by the bridge of the nose, the left cheekbone and left brow. Slaughter went down in his tracks as though shot. Carried to the clubhouse and from thence to a hospital, it was discovered that miraculously there was no fracture and Slaughter was up and able to leave Boston in a few days.

For the fifth consecutive time in his career, Slaughter was named to the National League All Star team.

#### SLAUGHTER'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
St. Louis	NL	146	549	91	176	27	11	11	90	.321	330	9	10	.971

SAM SNEAD

(Tenth Series—By Al Hirshberg and Joe McKenney)

Sam Snead, a tournament golfer since 1937, won several major tournaments in 1948. He finished on top in the Texas Open, the West Virginia Open, the West Virginia PGA, the Havana Invitational and the Havana Pro-Amateur.

He tied for fourth in the Los Angeles Open, won the Seminole Pro-Amateur (with George McCarthy, Jr.), finished fifth in the U.S. Open, tied for second in the North and South Open and was runner-up in the world's championship tournament at Tam O'Shanter. There he lost to Lloyd Mangrum.

He also went to the quarter-finals of the PGA tourney, being stymied on the thirty-seventh hole to lose to Masters' champion Claude Harmon.

JOHNNY VANDER MEER

(Ninth Series—By Gordon Campbell)

Johnny Vander Meer was unquestionably baseball's comeback player of 1948. After winning but nine games in 1947, Cincinnati's double-no-hit lefthander came back to post an excellent mark in 1948 of seventeen victories. He led the National League in bases on balls in 1948. His ERA of 3.41 compared favorably with his 1947 figure of 4.40.

JOHNNY VANDER MEER'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	IP	W	L	Pct.	H	R	ER	SO	BB	ERA
Cincinnati	NL	33	232	17	14	.548	204	97	88	120	124	3.41



## DIXIE WALKER

(Ninth Series—By Gordon Campbell)

On December 8, 1947 Dodger executive Branch Rickey risked arousing the collective wrath of the Borough of Brooklyn by trading Dixie Walker. The "Peoples' Choice" was sent to Pittsburgh, along with pitchers Hal Gregg and Vic Lombardi for infielders Billy Cox and Gene Mauch and pitcher Preacher Roe. As was expected, the trade produced repercussions in Flatbush. Dodger fans of years standing loudly proclaimed the severance of all loyalty ties with the Brooklyn team. The man in the street criticized the sale of Walker in no uncertain terms.

Dixie, on the other hand, accepted the transaction philosophically. In Pirate uniform he performed just as brilliantly as he had done in Brooklyn work clothes. The ovation he received from Dodger fans the first time he played in Brooklyn as a member of the Pirates, was a fitting tribute to his greatness as a ball player.

Although playing in twenty-one less games in 1948 than he had in 1947, Walker upped his batting average by ten points. The decreased play, however, was reflected in a smaller RBI total.

## DIXIE WALKER'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
Pittsburgh	NL	129	408	39	129	19	3	2	54	.316	168	4	4	.977

## BUCKY WALTERS

(Eighth Series—By Harold Kaese and others)

Cincinnati's one-time pitching great played his last full year as an active player in 1947 when he took part in 20 games and posted an eight and eight record. His ERA was 5.75. The following year he participated in seven games, winning none and losing three. He allowed twenty-five runs, eighteen earned runs, struck out nineteen and walked eighteen. His ERA was 4.63.

On August 6, 1948 he succeeded Johnny Neun as Cincinnati manager.

## BUCKY WALTER'S 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	IP	W	L	Pct.	H	R	ER	SO	BB	ERA
Cincinnati	NL	7	35	0	3	.000	42	25	18	19	18	4.63

## TED WILLIAMS

(Eighth Series—By Harold Kaese and others)

The American League's greatest living hitter continued to set records in 1947 and 1948. In '47 he established a record for leading the league in runs the most consecutive years (five). In addition, he led the league in batting, in total bases, in home runs, in runs batted in and in bases on balls.

In 1948 he tied a major-league record for most years leading the league in bases on balls (five). He tied an American League record for most years 100 or more

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bases on balls (five). He again led the American League in hitting, in doubles and in bases on balls.

He was a member of the American League All Star team both years, playing in 1947 and appearing as a pinch hitter in 1948.

Equally important with his continued batting brilliance was Williams' emergence as a top defensive outfielder. He played the difficult left-field wall at Fenway Park in the manner of a championship billiard expert making difficult carom shots. He threw accurately and well and many was the daring base runner who took chances with Williams' throwing arm only to later regret his temerity. Recognition of Williams' all-around contribution to Boston success during the 1948 season came in his being hailed by Boston baseball writers as the team's greatest hustler and most valuable single player.

### TED WILLIAMS' 1948 RECORD

Club	League	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	Avg.	PO	A	E	FA
Boston	AL	137	509	124	188	44	3	25	127	.369	289	9	5	.983

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